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The SPLENDID SPUR



by
"Q"
(A. T. QUILLER COUCH)

B98SKZ2-242

→KK

THE SPLENDID SPUR

Being Memoirs of the Adventures of
Mr. John Marvel, a Servant of His
Late Majesty King Charles I., in the
Years 1642-43: Written by Himself



Edited in Modern English by

Q

New York
International Association of Newspapers and Authors
1901

This One



4XLW-WBK-7QGA

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**NORTH RIVER BINDERY CO.
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TO
EDWARD GWYNNE EARDLEY-WILMOT.

MY DEAR EDDIE,

Whatever view a story-teller may take of his business, 'tis happy when he can think, "This book of mine will please such and such a friend," and may set that friend's name after the title-page. For even if to please (as some are beginning to hold) should be no part of his aim, at least 'twill always be a reward: and (in unworthier moods) next to a Writer I would choose to be a Lamplighter, as the only other that gets so cordial a "God bless him!" in the long winter evenings.

To win such a welcome at such a time from a new friend or two would be the happiest fortune for my tale. But to you I could wish it to speak particularly, seeing that under the coat of JACK MARVEL beats the heart of your friend

Q.

Torquay,

August 22nd, 1889.

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THE SPLENDID SPUR



CHAPTER I.

THE BOWLING-GREEN OF THE "CROWN."

HE that has jilted the Muse, forsaking her gentle pipe to follow the drum and trumpet, shall fruitlessly besiege her again when the time comes to sit at home and write down his adventures. 'Tis her revenge, as I am extremely sensible: and methinks she is the harder to me, upon reflection how near I came to being her life-long servant, as you are to hear.

'Twas on November 29th, A^o 1642—a clear, frosty day—that the King, with the Prince of Wales (newly recovered of the measles), the Princes Rupert and Maurice, and a great company of lords and gentlemen, horse and foot, came marching back to us from Reading. I was a scholar of Trinity College in Oxford at that time, and may begin my history at three o'clock on the same afternoon, when going (as my custom was) to Mr.

Rob. Drury for my fencing lesson, I found his lodgings empty.

They stood at the corner of Ship Street, as you turn into the Corn Market—a low wainscotted chamber, ill-lighted but commodious. “He is off to see the show,” thought I as I looked about me; and finding an easy cushion in the window, sat down to await him. Where presently, being tired out (for I had been carrying a halberd all day with the scholars’ troop in Magdalen College Grove), and in despite of the open lattice, I fell sound asleep.

It must have been an hour after that I awoke with a chill (as was natural), and was stretching out a hand to pull the window close, but suddenly sat down again and fell to watching instead.

The window look’d down, at the height of ten feet or so, upon a bowling-green at the back of the “Crown” Tavern (kept by John Davenant, in the Corn Market), and across it to a rambling wing of the same inn; the fourth side—that to my left—being but an old wall, with a broad sycamore growing against it. ’Twas already twilight; and in the dark’ning house, over the green, was now one casement brightly lit, the curtains undrawn, and within a company of noisy drinkers round a table. They were gaming, as was easily

told by their clicking of the dice and frequent oaths : and anon the bellow of some tipsy chorus would come across. 'Twas one of these catches, I daresay, that woke me : only just now my eyes were bent, not towards the singers, but on the still lawn between us.

The sycamore, I have hinted, was a broad tree, and must, in summer, have borne a goodly load of leaves : but now, in November, these were strewn thick over the green, and nothing left but stiff, naked boughs. Beneath it lay a crack'd bowl or two on the rank turf, and against the trunk a garden-bench rested, I suppose for the convenience of the players. On this a man was now seated.

He was reading in a little book ; and this first jogged my curiosity : for 'twas unnatural a man should read print at this dim hour, or, if he had a mind to try, should choose a cold bowling-green for his purpose. Yet he seemed to study his volume very attentively, but with a sharp look, now and then, towards the lighted window, as if the revellers disturb'd him. His back was partly turn'd to me ; and what with this and the growing dusk, I could but make a guess at his face : but a plenty of silver hair fell over his fur collar, and his shoulders were bent a great deal. I judged him between fifty and sixty. For the rest, he wore a dark,

simple suit, very straitly cut, with an ample furr'd cloak, and a hat rather tall, after the fashion of the last reign.

Now, why the man's behaviour so engaged me, I don't know: but at the end of half an hour I was still watching him. By this, 'twas near dark, bitter cold, and his pretence to read mere fondness: yet he persevered—though with longer glances at the casement above, where the din at times was fit to wake the dead.

And now one of the dicers upsets his chair with a curse, and gets on his feet. Looking up, I saw his features for a moment—a slight, pretty boy, scarce above eighteen, with fair curls and flush'd cheeks like a girl's. It made me admire to see him in this ring of purple, villainous faces. 'Twas evident he was a young gentleman of quality, as well by his bearing as his handsome cloak of amber satin barr'd with black. "I think the devil's in these dice!" I heard him crying, and a pretty hubbub all about him: but presently the drawer enters with more wine, and he sits down quietly to a fresh game.

As soon as 'twas started, one of the crew, that had been playing but was now dropp'd out, lounges up from his seat, and coming to the casement pushes it open for fresh air. He was one that till now had sat in full view

—a tall bully, with a gross pimpled nose ; and led the catches in a bull's voice. The rest of the players paid no heed to his rising ; and very soon his shoulders hid them, as he leant out, drawing in the cold breath.

During the late racket I had forgot for a while my friend under the sycamore, but now, looking that way, to my astonishment I saw him risen from his bench and stealing across to the house opposite. I say "stealing," for he kept all the way to the darker shadow of the wall, and besides had a curious trailing motion with his left foot as though the ankle of it had been wrung or badly hurt.

As soon as he was come beneath the window he stopped and called softly—

"Hist !"

The bully gave a start and look'd down. I could tell by this motion he did not look to find any one in the bowling-green at that hour. Indeed he had been watching the shaft of light thrown past him by the room behind, and now moved so as to let it fall on the man that addressed him.

The other stands close under the window, as if to avoid this, and calls again—

"Hist !" says he, and beckons with a finger.

The man at the window still held his tongue (I

suppose because those in the room would hear him if he spoke), and so for a while the two men studied one another in silence, as if considering their next moves.

After a bit, however, the bully lifted a hand, and turning back into the lighted room, walks up to one of the players, speaks a word or two and disappears.

I sat up on the window-seat, where till now I had been crouching for fear the shaft of light should betray me, and presently (as I was expecting) heard the latch of the back-porch gently lifted, and spied the heavy form of the bully coming softly over the grass.

Now, I would not have my readers prejudiced, and so may tell them this was the first time in my life I had played the eaves-dropper. That I did so now I can never be glad enough, but 'tis true, nevertheless, my conscience pricked me; and I was even making a motion to withdraw when that occurred which would have fixed any man's attention, whether he wish'd it or no.

The bully must have closed the door behind him but carelessly, for hardly could he take a dozen steps when it opened again with a scuffle, and the large house-dog belonging to the "Crown" flew at his heels with a vicious snarl and snap of the teeth.

'Twas enough to scare the coolest. But the fellow turn'd as if shot, and before he could snap again, had

gripped him fairly by the throat. The struggle that follow'd I could barely see, but I heard the horrible sounds of it—the hard, short breathing of the man, the hoarse rage working in the dog's throat—and it turned me sick. The dog—a mastiff—was fighting now to pull loose, and the pair swayed this way and that in the dusk, panting and murderous.

I was almost shouting aloud—feeling as though 'twere my own throat thus gripp'd—when the end came. The man had his legs planted well apart. I saw his shoulders heave up and bend as he tightened the pressure of his fingers ; then came a moment's dead silence, then a hideous gurgle, and the mastiff dropped back, his hind legs trailing limp.

The bully held him so for a full minute, peering close to make sure he was dead, and then without loosening his hold, dragged him across the grass under my window. By the sycamore he halted, but only to shift his hands a little ; and so, swaying on his hips, sent the carcase with a heave over the wall. I heard it drop with a thud on the far side.

During this fierce wrestle—which must have lasted about two minutes—the clatter and shouting of the company above had gone on without a break ; and all this while the man with the white hair had rested quietly

on one side, watching. But now he steps up to where the bully stood mopping his face (for all the coolness of the evening), and, with a finger between the leaves of his book, bows very politely.

"You handled that dog, sir, choicely well," says he, in a thin voice that seemed to have a chuckle hidden in it somewhere.

The other ceased mopping to get a good look at him.

"But sure," he went on, "'twas hard on the poor cur, that had never heard of Captain Lucius Higgs——"

I thought the bully would have had him by the windpipe and pitched him after the mastiff, so fiercely he turn'd at the sound of this name. But the old gentleman skipped back quite nimbly and held up a finger.

"I'm a man of peace. If another title suits you better——"

"Where the devil got you that name?" growled the bully, and had half a mind to come on again, but the other put in briskly—

"I'm on a plain errand of business. No need, as you hint, to mention names; and therefore let me present myself as Mr. Z. The residue of the alphabet is at your service to pick and choose from.

"My name is Luke Settle," said the big man

hoarsely (but whether this was his natural voice or no I could not tell).

"Let us say 'Mr. X.' I prefer it."

The old gentleman, as he said this, popped his head on one side, laid the forefinger of his right hand across the book, and seem'd to be considering.

"Why did you throttle that dog a minute ago?" he asked sharply.

"Why, to save my skin," answers the fellow, a bit puzzled.

"Would you have done it for fifty pounds?"

"Aye, or half that."

"And how if it had been a *puppy*, Mr. X?"

Now all this from my hiding I had heard very clearly, for they stood right under me in the dusk. But as the old gentleman paused to let his question sink in, and the bully to catch the drift of it before answering, one of the dicers above struck up to sing a catch—

"With a hey, trolly-lolly! a leg to the Devil,
And answer him civil, and off with your cap:
Sing—Hey, trolly-lolly! Good-morrow, Sir Evil,
We've finished the tap,
And, saving your worship, we care not a rap!"

While this din continued, the stranger held up one forefinger again, as if beseeching silence, the other remaining still between the pages of his book.

"Pretty boys!" he said, as the noise died away; "pretty boys! 'Tis easily seen they have a bird to pluck."

"He's none of my plucking."

"And if he were, why not? Sure you've picked a feather or two before now in the Low Countries—hey?"

"I'll tell you what," interrupts the big man, "next time you crack one of your death's-head jokes, over the wall you go after the dog. What's to prevent it?"

"Why, this," answers the old fellow, cheerfully. "There's money to be made by doing no such thing. And I don't carry it all about with me. So, as 'tis late, we'd best talk business at once."

They moved away towards the seat under the sycamore, and now their words reached me no longer—only the low murmur of their voices or (to be correct) of the elder man's: for the other only spoke now and then, to put a question, as it seemed. Presently I heard an oath rapped out, and saw the bully start up. "Hush, man!" cried the other, and "hark-ye now——"; so he sat down again. Their very forms were lost within the shadow. I, myself, was cold enough by this time and had a cramp in one leg—but lay still, nevertheless. And after awhile they stood up together, and

same pacing across the bowling-green, side by side, the older man trailing his foot painfully to keep step. You may be sure I strain'd my ears.

"—— besides the pay," the stranger was saying, "there's all you can win of this young fool, Anthony, and all you find on the pair, which I'll wager——"

They passed out of hearing, but turned soon, and came back again. The big man was speaking this time.

"I'll be shot if I know what game *you're* playing in this."

The elder chuckled softly. "I'll be shot if I mean you to," said he.

And this was the last I heard. For now there came a clattering at the door behind me, and Mr. Robert Drury reeled in, hiccuping a maudlin ballad about "*Tib and young Colin, one fine day, beneath the hay-cock shade-a,*" &c., &c., and cursing to find his fire gone out, and all in darkness. Liquor was ever his master, and to-day the King's health had been a fair excuse. He did not spy me, but the roar of his ballad had startled the two men outside, and so, while he was stumbling over chairs, and groping for a tinder-box, I slipt out in the darkness, and down-stairs into the street.

CHAPTER II.

THE YOUNG MAN IN THE CLOAK OF AMBER SATIN.

GUESS, any of you, if these events disturbed my rest that night. 'Twas four o'clock before I dropp'd asleep in my bed in Trinity, and my last thoughts were still busy with the words I had heard. Nor, on the morrow, did it fare any better with me: so that, at rhetoric lecture, our president—Dr. Ralph Kettle—took me by the ears before the whole class. He was the fiercer upon me as being older than the gross of my fellow-scholars, and (as he thought) the more restless under discipline. "A tutor'd adolescence," he would say, "is a fair grace before meat," and had his hour-glass enlarged to point the moral for us. But even a rhetoric lecture must have an end, and so, tossing my gown to the porter, I set off at last for Magdalen Bridge, where the new barricado was building, along the Physic Garden, in front of East Gate.

The day was dull and low'ring, though my wits were too busy to heed the sky; but scarcely was I past the small gate in the city wall when a brisk shower of hail and sleet drove me to shelter in the Pig Market

(or *Proscholium*) before the Divinity School. 'Tis an ample vaulted passage, as I daresay you know; and here I found a great company of people already driven by the same cause.

To describe them fully 'twould be necessary to paint the whole state of our city in those distracted times, which I have neither wit nor time for. But here, to-day, along with many doctors and scholars, were walking courtiers, troopers, mountebanks, cut-purses, astrologers, rogues and gamesters; together with many of the first ladies and gentlemen of England, as the Prince Maurice, the lords Andover, Digby and Colepepper, my lady Thynne, Mistress Fanshawe, Mr. Secretary Nicholas, the famous Dr. Harvey, arm-in-arm with my lord Falkland (whose boots were splash'd with mud, he having ridden over from his house at Great Tew), and many such, all mixt in this incredible tag-rag. Mistress Fanshawe, as I remember, was playing on a lute, which she carried always slung about her shoulders: and close beside her, a fellow impudently puffing his specific against the *morbus campestris*, which already had begun to invade us.

"*Who'll buy?*" he was bawling. "*'Tis from the receipt of a famous Italian, and never yet failed man, woman, nor child, unless the heart were clean drown'd in*

the disease: the best part of it good muscadine, and has virtue against the plague, small-pox, or surfeits!"

I was standing before this jackanapes, when I heard a stir in the crowd behind me, and another calling, "*Who'll buy? Who'll buy?*"

Turning, I saw a young man, very gaily drest, moving quickly about at the far end of the Pig Market, and behind him an old lackey, bent double with the weight of two great baskets that he carried. The baskets were piled with books, clothes, and gewgaws of all kinds; and 'twas the young gentleman that hawked his wares himself. "*What d'ye lack?*" he kept shouting, and would stop to unfold his merchandise, holding up now a book, and now a silk doublet, and running over their merits like any huckster—but with the merriest conceit in the world.

And yet 'twas not this that sent my heart flying into my mouth at the sight of him. For by his curls and womanish face, no less than the amber cloak with the black bars, I knew him at once for the same I had seen yesterday among the dicers.

As I stood there, drawn this way and that by many reflections, he worked his way through the press, selling here and there a trifle from his baskets, and at length came to a halt in front of me.

"Ha!" he cried, pulling off his plumed hat, and bowing low, "a scholar, I perceive. Let me serve you, sir. Here is the 'History of Saint George,'" and he picked out a thin brown quarto and held it up; "written by Master Peter Heylin; a ripe book they tell me (though, to be sure, I never read beyond the title), and the price a poor two shillings."

Now, all this while I was considering what to do. So, as I put my hand in my pocket, and drew out the shillings, I said very slowly, looking him in the eyes (but softly, so that the lackey might not hear)—

"So thus you feed your expenses at the dice: and my shilling, no doubt, is for Luke Settle, as well as the rest."

For the moment, under my look, he went white to the lips; then clapped his hand to his sword, withdrew it, and answered me, red as a turkey-cock—

"Shalt be a parson, yet, Master Scholar: but art in a damn'd hurry, it seems."

Now, I had ever a quick temper, and as he turned on his heel, was like to have replied and raised a brawl. My own meddling tongue had brought the rebuff upon me: but yet my heart was hot as he walked away.

I was standing there and looking after him, turning over in my hand the "Life of Saint George," when my

fingers were aware of a slip of paper between the pages. Pulling it out, I saw 'twas scribbled over with writing and figures, as follows :—

“MR. ANTHONY KILLIGREW, his acc^t for Oct. 25th, MDCXLII. — *For herrings*, 2d.; *for coffie*, 4d.; *for scowring my coat*, 6d.; *at bowls*, 5s. 10d.; *for bleading me*, 1s. 0d.; *for y^e King's speech*, 3d.; *for spic'd wine (with Marjory)*, 2s. 4d.; *for seeing y^e Rhinoceros*, 4d.; *at y^e Ranter-go-round*, 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.; *for a pair of silver buttons*, 2s. 6d.; *for apples*, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; *for ale*, 6d.; *at y^e dice*, £17 5s.; *for spic'd wine (again)*, 4s. 6d.”

And so on.

As I glanced my eye down this paper, my anger oozed away, and a great feeling of pity came over me, not only at the name of Anthony—the name I had heard spoken in the bowling-green last night—but also to see that monstrous item of £17 odd spent on the dice. 'Twas such a boy, too, after all, that I was angry with, that had spent fourpence to see the rhinoceros at a fair, and rode on the ranter-go-round (with ‘Marjory,’ no doubt, as 'twas for her, no doubt, the silver buttons were bought). So that, with quick forgiveness, I hurried after him, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

He stood by the entrance, counting up his money, and drew himself up very stiff.

"I think, sir," said I, "this paper is yours."

"I thank you," he answered, taking it, and eyeing me. "Is there anything, besides, you wished to say?"

"A great deal, maybe, if your name be Anthony."

"Master Anthony Killigrew is my name, sir; now serving under Lord Bernard Stewart in His Majesty's troop of guards."

"And mine is Jack Marvel," said I.

"Of the Yorkshire Marvels?"

"Why, yes; though but a shoot of that good stock, transplanted to Cumberland, and there sadly withered."

"'Tis no matter, sir," said he politely; "I shall be proud to cross swords with you."

"Why, bless your heart!" I cried out, full of laughter at this childish punctilio; "d'ye think I came to fight you?"

"If not, sir"—and he grew colder than ever—"you are going a cursed roundabout way to avoid it."

Upon this, finding no other way out of it, I began my tale at once: but hardly had come to the meeting of the two men on the bowling-green, when he interrupts me politely—

"I think, Master Marvel, as yours is like to be a story of some moment, I will send this fellow back to

my lodgings. He's a long-ear'd dog that I am saving from the gallows for so long as my conscience allows me. The shower is done, I see: so if you know of a retir'd spot, we will talk there more at our leisure."

He dismiss'd his lackey, and stroll'd off with me to the Trinity Grove, where, walking up and down, I told him all I had heard and seen the night before.

"And now," said I, "can you tell me if you have any such enemy as this white-hair'd man, with the limping gait?"

He had come to a halt, sucking in his lips and seeming to reflect—

"I know one man," he began: "but no—'tis impossible."

As I stood, waiting to hear more, he clapt his hand in mine, very quick and friendly: "Jack," he cried;—"I'll call thee Jack—'twas an honest good turn thou hadst in thy heart to do me, and I a surly rogue to think of fighting—I that could make mince-meat of thee."

"I can fence a bit," answer'd I,

going to say I had never seen the like—ah, me! that both have seen and know the twin image so well.

“I think,” said I, “you had better be considering what to do.”

He laugh’d outright this time; and resting with his legs cross’d, against the trunk of an elm, twirl’d an end of his long lovelocks, and looked at me comically. Said he: “Tell me, Jack, is there aught in me that offends thee?”

“Why, no,” I answered. “I think you’re a very proper young man—such as I should loathe to see spoil’d by Master Settle’s knife.”

“Art not quick at friendship, Jack, but better at advising; only in this case fortune has prevented thy good offices. Hark ye,” he lean’d forward and glanc’d to right and left, “if these twain intend my hurt—as indeed ’twould seem—they lose their labour: for this very night I ride from Oxford.”

“And why is that?”

“I’ll tell thee, Jack, tho’ I deserve to be shot. I am bound with a letter from His Majesty to the Army of the West, where I have friends, for my father’s sake—Sir Deakin Killigrew of Gleys, in Cornwall. ’Tis a sweet country, they say, tho’ I have never seen it.”

“Not seen thy father’s country?”

"Why no—for he married a Frenchwoman, Jack, God rest her dear soul!"—he lifted his hat—"and settled in that country, near Morlaix, in Brittany, among my mother's kin; my grandfather refusing to see or speak with him, for wedding a poor woman without his consent. And in France was I born and bred, and came to England two years ago; and this last July the old curmudgeon died. So that my father, who was an only son, is even now in England returning to his estates: and with him my only sister Delia. I shall meet them on the way. To think of it!" (and I declare the tears sprang to his eyes): "Delia will be a woman grown, and ah! to see dear Cornwall together!"

Now I myself was an only child, and had been made an orphan when but nine years old, by the small-pox that visited our home in Wastdale Village, and carried off my father, the Vicar, and my dear mother. Yet his simple words spoke to my heart and woke so tender a yearning for the small stone cottage, and the bridge, and the grey fells of Yewbarrow above it, that a mist rose in my eyes too, and I turn'd away to hide it.

"'Tis a ticklish business," said I after a minute, "to carry the King's letter. Not one in four of his messengers comes through, they say. But since it keeps you from the dice——"

"That's true. To-night I make an end."

"To-night!"

"Why, yes. To-night I go for my revenge, and ride straight from the inn-door."

"Then I go with you to the 'Crown,' I cried, very positive.

He dropp'd playing with his curl, and look'd me in the face, his mouth twitching with a queer smile.

"And so thou shalt Jack : but why?"

"I'll give no reason," said I, and knew I was blushing.

"Then be at the corner of All Hallows' Church in Turl Street at seven to-night. I lodge over Master Simon's, the glover, and must be about my affairs. Jack,"—he came near and took my hand—"am sure thou lovest me."

He nodded, with another cordial smile, and went his way up the grove, his amber cloak flaunting like a belated butterfly under the leafless trees; and so pass'd out of my sight.

CHAPTER III.

I FIND MYSELF IN A TAVERN BRAWL: AND BARELY

ESCAPE.

IT wanted, maybe, a quarter to seven, that evening, when, passing out at the College Gate on my way to All Hallows' Church, I saw under the lantern there a man loitering and talking with the porter. 'Twas Master Anthony's lackey; and as I came up, he held out a note for me.

Deare Jack

Wee goe to the "Crowne" at VI. o'clock, I having mett with Captain Settle, who is on dewty with the horse to-nite, and must to Abendonn by IX. I looke for you—

Your unfayned loving

A. K.

The bearer has left my servise, and his helth concerns me nott. Soe kik him if he tarrie.

This last advice I had no time to carry out with any thoroughness: but being put in a great dread by this change of hour, pelted off towards the Corn Market as fast as legs could take me, which was the undoing of a little round citizen into whom I ran full-tilt at the

corner of Balliol College : who, before I could see his face in the darkness, was tipp'd on his back in the gutter and using the most dismal expressions. So I left him, considering that my excuses would be unsatisfying to his present demands, and to his cooler judgment a superfluity.

The windows of the "Crown" were cheerfully lit behind their red blinds. A few straddling grooms and troopers talked and spat in the brightness of the entrance, and outside in the street was a servant leading up and down a beautiful sorrel mare, ready saddled, that was mark'd on the near hind leg with a high white stocking. In the passage, I met the host of the "Crown," Master John Davenant, and sure (I thought) in what odd corners will the Muse pick up her favourites! For this slow, loose-cheek'd vintner was no less than father to Will Davenant, our Laureate, and had belike read no other verse in his life but those at the bottom of his own pint-pots.

"Top of the stairs," says he, indicating my way, "and open the door ahead of you, if y'are the young gentleman Master Killigrew spoke of."

I had my foot on the bottom step, when from the room above comes the crash of a table upsetting, with a noise of broken glass, chairs thrust back, and a racket of

outcries. Next moment, the door was burst open, letting out a flood of light and curses ; and down flies a drawer, three steps at a time, with a red stain of wine trickling down his white face.

“ Murder ! ” he gasped out ; and sitting down on a stair, fell to mopping his face, all sick and trembling.

I was dashing past him, with the landlord at my heels, when three men came tumbling out at the door, and down-stairs. I squeez’d myself against the wall to let them pass : but Master Davenant was pitch’d to the very foot of the stairs. And then he picked himself up and ran out into the Corn Market, the drawer after him, and both shouting “ Watch ! Watch ! ” at the top of their lungs ; and so left the three fellows to push by the women already gather’d in the passage, and gain the street at their ease. All this happen’d while a man could count twenty ; and in half a minute I heard the ring of steel and was standing in the doorway.

There was now no light within but what was shed by the fire and two tallow candles that gutter’d on the mantel-shelf. The remaining candlesticks lay in a pool of wine on the floor, amid broken glasses, bottles, scattered coins, dice-boxes and pewter pots. In the corner to my right cower’d a pot-boy, with tankard dangling in his hand, and the contents spilling into his

shoes. His wide terrified eyes were fixt on the far end of the room, where Anthony and the brute Settle stood, with a shatter'd chair between them. Their swords were cross'd in tierce, and grating together as each sought occasion for a lunge: which might have been fair enough but for a dog-fac'd trooper in a frowsy black periwig, who, as I enter'd, was gathering a handful of coins from under the fallen table, and now ran across, sword in hand, to the Captain's aid.

'Twas Anthony that fac'd me, with his heel against the wainscoting, and, catching my cry of alarm, he call'd out cheerfully over the Captain's shoulder, but without lifting his eyes—

“Just in time, Jack! Take off the second cur, that's a sweet boy!”

Now I carried no sword; but seizing the tankard from the pot-boy's hand, I hurl'd it at the dog-fac'd trooper. It struck him fair between the shoulder-blades; and with a yell of pain he spun round and came towards me, his point glittering in a way that turn'd me cold. I gave back a pace, snatch'd up a chair (that luckily had a wooden seat) and with my back against the door, waited his charge.

'Twas in this posture that, flinging a glance across the room, I saw the Captain's sword describe a small

circle of light, and next moment, with a sharp cry, Anthony caught at the blade, and stagger'd against the wall, pinn'd through the chest to the wainscoting.

"Out with the lights, Dick!" bawl'd Settle, tugging out his point. "Quick, fool—the window!"

Dick, with a back sweep of his hand, sent the candles flying off the shelf; and, save for the flicker of the hearth, we were in darkness. I felt, rather than saw, his rush towards me; leapt aside; and brought down my chair with a crash on his skull. He went down like a nine-pin, but scrambled up in a trice, and was running for the window. There was a shout below as the Captain thrust the lattice open: another, and the two dark forms had clambered through the purple square of the casement, and dropp'd into the bowling-green below.

By this, I had made my way across the room, and found Anthony sunk against the wall, with his feet outstretched. There was something he held out towards me, groping for my hand and at the same time whispering in a thick, choking voice—

"Here, Jack, here: pocket it quick!"

'Twas a letter, and as my fingers closed on it they met a damp smear, the meaning of which was but too plain.

"Button it—sharp—in thy breast: now feel for my sword."

"First let me tend thy hurt, dear lad."

"Nay—quickly, my sword! 'Tis pretty, Jack, to hear thee say 'dear lad.' A cheat to die like this—could have laugh'd for years yet. The dice were cogg'd—hast found it?"

I groped beside him, found the hilt, and held it up.

"So—'tis thine, Jack: and my mare, Molly, and the letter to take. Say to Delia—Hark! they are on the stairs. Say to——"

With a shout the door was flung wide, and on the threshold stood the Watch, their lanterns held high and shining in Anthony's white face, and on the black stain where his doublet was thrown open.

In numbers they were six or eight, led by a small, wry-necked man that held a long staff, and wore a gilt chain over his furr'd collar. Behind, in the doorway, were huddled half a dozen women, peering: and Master Davenant at the back of all, his great face looming over their shoulders like a moon.

"Now, speak up, Master Short!"

"Aye, that I will—that I will: but my head is considering of affairs," answer'd Master Short—he of the wry neck. "One, two, three——" He look'd round

the room, and finding but one capable of resisting (for the pot-boy was by this time in a fit), clear'd his throat, and spoke up—

“In the king’s name, I arrest you all—so help me God! Now what’s the matter?”

“Murder,” said I, looking up from my work of staunching Anthony’s wound.

“Then forbear, and don’t do it.”

“Why, Master Short, they’ve been forbearin’ these ten minutes,” a woman’s voice put in.

“Hush, and hear Master Short: he knows the law, an’ all the dubious maxims of the same.”

“Aye, aye: he says forbear i’ the king’s name, which is to say, that other forbearing is neither law nor grace. Now then, Master Short!”

Thus exhorted, the man of law continued—

“I charge ye as honest men to disperse!”

“Odds truth, Master Short, why you’ve just laid ’em under arrest!”

“H’m, true: then let ’em stay so—in the king’s name—and have done with it.”

Master Short, in fact, was growing testy: but now the women push’d by him, and, by screaming at the sight of blood, put him out of all patience. Dragging them back by the skirts, he told me he

must take the depositions, and pull'd out pen and ink-horn.

"Sirs," said I, laying poor Anthony's head softly back, "you are too late: whilst ye were cackling my friend is dead."

"Then, young man, thou must come along."

"Come along?"

"The charge is *homocidium*, or man-slaying, with or without malice prepense——"

"But——" I look'd round. The pot-boy was insensible, and my eyes fell on Master Davenant, who slowly shook his head.

"I'll say not a word," said he, stolidly: "lost twenty pound, one time, by a lawsuit."

"Pack of fools!" I cried, driven beyond endurance. "The guilty ones have escap'd these ten minutes. Now stop me who dares!"

And dashing my left fist on the nose of a watchman who would have seized me, I clear'd a space with Anthony's sword, made a run for the casement, and dropp'd out upon the bowling-green.

A pretty shout went up as I pick'd myself off the turf and rush'd for the back door. 'Twas unbarr'd, and in a moment I found myself tearing down the passage and out into the Corn Market, with a score or so

tumbling down-stairs at my heels, and yelling to stop me. Turning sharp to my right, I flew up Ship Street, and through the Turl, and doubled back up the High Street, sword in hand. The people I pass'd were too far taken aback, as I suppose, to interfere. But a many must have join'd in the chase: for presently the street behind me was thick with the clatter of footsteps and cries of "A thief—a thief! Stop him!"

At Quater Voies I turn'd again, and sped down towards St. Aldate's, thence to the left by Wild Boar Street, and into St. Mary's Lane. By this, the shouts had grown fainter, but were still following. Now I knew there was no possibility to get past the city gates, which were well guarded at night. My hope reach'd no further than the chance of outwitting the pursuit for a while longer. In the end I was sure the pot-boy's evidence would clear me, and therefore began to enjoy the fun. Even my certain expulsion from College on the morrow seem'd of a piece with the rest of events and (prospectively) a matter for laughter. For the struggle at the "Crown" had unhinged my wits, as I must suppose and you must believe, if you would understand my behaviour in the next half-hour.

A bright thought had struck me: and taking a fresh wind, I set off again round the corner of Oriel College,

and down Merton Street towards Master Timothy Carter's house, my mother's cousin. This gentleman—who was town-clerk to the Mayor and Corporation of Oxford—was also in a sense my guardian, holding in trust about £200 (which was all my inheritance), and spending the same jealously on my education. He was a very small, precise lawyer, about sixty years old, shaped like a pear, with a prodigious self-important manner that came of associating with great men: and all the knowledge I had of him was pick'd up on the rare occasions (about twice a year) that I din'd at his table. He had early married and lost an aged shrew, whose money had been the making of him: and had more respect for law and authority than any three men in Oxford. So that I reflected, with a kind of desperate hilarity, on the greeting he was like to give me.

This kinsman of mine had a fine house at the east end of Merton Street as you turn into Logic Lane: and I was ten yards from the front door, and running my fastest, when suddenly I tripp'd and fell headlong.

Before I could rise, a hand was on my shoulder, and a voice speaking in my ear—

“Pardon, comrade. We are two of a trade, I see.”

’Twas a fellow that had been lurking at the corner of the lane, and had thrust out a leg as I pass’d. He

was pricking up his ears now to the cries of "Thief—thief!" that had already reach'd the head of the street, and were drawing near.

"I am no thief," said I.

"Quick!" He dragged me into the shadow of the lane. "Hast a crown in thy pocket?"

"Why?"

"Why, for a good turn. I'll fog these gentry for thee. Many thanks, comrade," as I pull'd out the last few shillings of my pocket-money. "Now pitch thy sword over the wall here, and set thy foot on my hand. 'Tis a rich man's garden, t'other side, that I was meaning to explore myself; but another night will serve."

"'Tis Master Carter's," said I; "and he's my kinsman."

"The devil!—but never mind, up with thee! Now mark a pretty piece of play. 'Tis pity thou shouldst be across the wall and unable to see."

He gave a great hoist: catching at the coping of the wall, I pull'd myself up and sat astride of it.

"Good turf below—ta-ta, comrade!"

By now, the crowd was almost at the corner. Dropping about eight feet on to good turf, as the fellow had said, I pick'd myself up and listen'd.

"Which way went he?" call'd one, as they came near.

"Down the street!" "No: up the lane!"
 "Hush!" "Up the lane, I'll be sworn." "Here,
 hand the lantern!" &c. &c.

While they debated, my friend stood close on the other side of the wall: but now I heard him dash suddenly out, and up the lane for his life. "There he goes!" "Stop him!" the cries broke out afresh. "Stop him, i' the king's name!" The whole pack went pelting by, shouting, stumbling, swearing.

For two minutes or more the stragglers continued to hurry past by ones and twos. As soon as their shouts died away, I drew freer breath and look'd around.

I was in a small, turfed garden, well stock'd with evergreen shrubs, at the back of a tall house that I knew for Master Carter's. But what puzzled me was a window in the first floor, very brightly lit, and certain sounds issuing therefrom that had no correspondence with my kinsman's reputation.

"It was a frog leapt into a pool—
 Fol—de—riddle, went souse in the middle!
 Says he, This is better than moping in school,
 With a——"

"—Your Royal Highness, have some pity! What hideous folly! Oh, dear, dear——"

"With a fa-la—tweedle—tweedle,
Tiddifol—iddifol—ido!"

"—Your Royal Highness, I *cannot* sing the dreadful stuff! Think of my grey hairs!"

"Tush! Master Carter—nonsense; 'tis choicely well sung. Come, brother, the chorus!"

"With a fa-la——"

And the chorus was roar'd forth, with shouts of laughter and clinking of glasses. Then came an interval of mournful appeal, and my kinsman's voice was again lifted—

'He scatter'd the tadpoles, and set 'em agog,
Hey! nod—noddy—all head and no body!
Oh, mammy! Oh, nunky!——"

"—O, mercy, mercy! it makes me sweat for shame."

Now meantime I had been searching about the garden, and was lucky enough to find a tool shed, and inside of this a ladder hanging, which now I carried across and planted beneath the window. I had a shrewd notion of what I should find at the top, remembering now to have heard that the Princes Rupert and Maurice were lodging with Master Carter: but the truth beat all my fancies.

For climbing softly up and looking in, I beheld

my poor kinsman perch'd on his chair a-top of the table, in the midst of glasses, decanters, and desserts: his wig askew, his face white, save where, between the eyes, a medlar had hit and broken, and his glance shifting wildly between the two princes, who in easy postures, loose and tipsy, lounged on either side of him, and beat with their glasses on the board.

"Bravissimo! More, Master Carter—more!"

"O mammy, O nunky, here's cousin Jack Frog—
With a fa—la——"

I lifted my knuckles and tapp'd on the pane; whereon Prince Maurice starts up with an oath, and coming to the window, flings it open.

"Pardon, your Highness," said I, and pull'd myself past him into the room, as cool as you please.

'Twas worth while to see their surprise. Prince Maurice ran back to the table for his sword: his brother (being more thoroughly drunk) dropp'd a decanter on the floor, and lay back staring in his chair. While as for my kinsman, he sat with mouth wide and eyes starting, as tho' I were a very ghost. In the which embarrassment I took occasion to say, very politely—

"Good evening, nunky!"

"Who the devil is this?" gasps Prince Rupert.

"Why the fact is, your Highnesses," answered I,

stepping up and laying my sword on the table, while I pour'd out a glass, "Master Timothy Carter here is my guardian, and has the small sum of £200 in his possession for my use, of which I happen to-night to stand in immediate need. So you see——" I finish'd the sentence by tossing off a glass. "This is rare stuff!" I said.

"Blood and fury!" burst out Prince Rupert, fumbling for his sword, and then gazing, drunk and helpless.

"Two hundred pound! Thou jackanapes——" began Master Carter.

"I'll let you off with fifty to-night," said I.

"Ten thousand——!"

"No, fifty. Indeed, nunky," I went on, "'tis very simple. I was at the 'Crown' tavern——"

"At a tavern!"

"Aye, at a game of dice——"

"Dice!"

"Aye, and a young man was killed——"

"Thou shameless puppy! A man murder'd!"

"Aye, nunky; and the worst is they say 'twas I that kill'd him."

"He's mad. The boy's stark raving mad!" exclaim'd my kinsman. "To come here in this trim!"

"Why, truly, nunky, thou art a strange one to talk

of appearances. Oh, dear!" and I burst into a wild fit of laughing, for the wine had warm'd me up to play the comedy out. "To hear thee sing

" ' With a fa—la—tweedle—tweedle! ' "

and — Oh, nunky, that medlar on thy face is so funny!"

"In Heaven's name, stop!" broke in the Prince Maurice. "Am I mad, or only drunk? Rupert, if you love me, say I am no worse than drunk."

"Lord knows," answer'd his brother. "I for one was never this way before."

"Indeed, your Highnesses be only drunk," said I, "and able at that to sign the order that I shall ask you for."

"An order!"

"To pass the city gates to-night."

"Oh, stop him somebody," groan'd Prince Rupert: "my head is whirling."

"With your leave," I explain'd, pouring out another glassful: "'tis the simplest matter, and one that a child could understand. You see, this young man was kill'd, and they charg'd me with it; so away I ran, and the Watch after me; and therefore I wish to pass the city gates. And as I may have far to travel, and gave

The day ('twas drawing near noon as I started) was cold and clear, with a coating of rime over the fields : and my horse's feet rang cheerfully on the frozen road. His pace was of the soberest : but, as I was no skilful rider, this suited me rather than not. Only it was galling to be told so, as happen'd before I had gone three miles.

'Twas my friend the pickpocket : and he sat before a fire of dry sticks a little way back from the road. His scanty hair, stiff as a badger's, now stood upright around his batter'd cap, and he look'd at me over the bushes, with his hook'd nose thrust forward like a bird's beak.

"Bien lightmans, comrade—good day ! 'Tis a good world ; so stop and dine."

I pull'd up my grey.

"Glad you find it so," I answered ; "you had a nigh chance to compare it with the next, last night."

"Shan't do so well i' the next, I fear," he said with a twinkle : "but I owe thee something, and here's a hedgehog that in five minutes 'll be baked to a turn. 'Tis a good world, and the better that no man can count on it. Last night my dripping duds helped me to a cant tale, and got me a silver penny from a man of religion. Good 's in the worst ; and life's like hunting

the squirrel—a man gets much good exercise thereat, but seldom what he hunts for.”

“That’s as good morality as Aristotle’s,” said I.

“’Tis better for *me*, because ’tis mine.” While I tether’d my horse he blew at the embers, wherein lay a good-sized ball of clay, baking. After a while he look’d up with red cheeks. “They were so fast set on drowning me,” he continued with a wink, “they couldn’t spare time to look i’ my pocket—the ruffin cly them!”

“He pull’d the clay-ball out of the fire, crack’d it, and lo! inside was a hedgehog cook’d, the spikes sticking in the clay, and coming away with it. So he divided the flesh with his knife, and upon a slice of bread from his wallet it made very delicate eating: tho’ I doubt if I enjoyed it as much as did my comrade, who swore over and over that the world was good, and as the wintry sun broke out, and the hot ashes warm’d his knees, began to chatter at a great pace.

“Why, sir, but for the pretty uncertainty of things I’d as lief die here as I sit——”

He broke off at the sound of wheels, and a coach with two postillions spun past us on the road.

I had just time to catch a glimpse of a figure huddled in the corner, and a sweet pretty girl with chestnut curls seated beside it, behind the glass.

After the coach came a heavy broad-shoulder'd servant riding on a stout grey ; who flung us a sharp glance as he went by, and at twenty yards' distance turn'd again to look.

"That's luck," observed the pickpocket, as the travellers disappear'd down the highway : "To-morrow, with a slice of it, I might be riding in such a coach as that, and have the hydropsy, to boot. Good lack ! when I was ta'en prisoner by the Turks a-sailing i' the *Mary* of London, and sold for a slave at Algiers, I escap'd, after two months, with Eli Sprat, a Gravesend man, in a small open boat. Well, we sail'd three days and nights, and all the time there was a small sea-bird following, flying round and round us, and calling two notes that sounded for all the world like 'Wind'ard ! Wind'ard !' So at last says Eli, ' 'Tis heaven's voice bidding us ply to wind'ard.' And so we did, and on the fourth day made Marseilles ; and who should be first to meet Eli on the quay but a Frenchwoman he had married five years before, and left. And the jade had him clapp'd in the pillory, alongside of a cheating fishmonger with a collar of stinking smelts, that turn'd poor Eli's stomach completely. Now there's somewhat to set against the story of Whittington next time 'tis told you."

I was now for bidding the old rascal good-bye. But

he offer'd to go with me as far as Hungerford, where we should turn into the Bath road. At first I was shy of accepting, by reason of his coat, wherein patches of blue, orange-tawny and flame-colour quite overlaid the parent black : but closed with him upon his promise to teach me the horsemanship that I so sadly lacked. And by time we enter'd Hungerford town I was advanced so far, and bestrode my old grey so easily, that in gratitude I offer'd him supper and bed at an inn, if he would but buy a new coat : to which he agreed, saying that the world was good.

By this, the day was clouded over and the rain coming down apace. So that as soon as my comrade was decently array'd at the first slop-shop we came to, 'twas high time to seek an inn. We found quarters at "The Horn," and sought the travellers' room, and a fire to dry ourselves.

In this room, at the window, were two men who look'd lazily up at our entrance. They were playing at a game, which was no other than to race two snails up a pane of glass and wager which should prove the faster.

"A wet day!" said my comrade cheerfully.

The pair regarded him. "I'll lay you a crown it clears within the hour!" said one.

"And I another," put in the other; and with that they went back to their sport.

Drawing near, I myself was soon as eager as they in watching the snails, when my companion drew my notice to a piece of writing on the window over which they were crawling. 'Twas a set of verses scribbled there, that must have been scratch'd with a diamond: and to my surprise—for I had not guess'd him a scholar—he read them out for my benefit. Thus the writing ran, for I copied it later:—

"*Master Ephraim Tucker*, his dying counsell to way-fardingers; to seek *The Splendid Spur*.

Not on the necks of prince or hound,
Nor on a woman's finger twin'd,
May gold from the deriding ground
Keep sacred that we sacred bind:
Only the heel
Of splendid steel
Shall stand secure on aliding fate,
When golden navies weep their freight.

"The scarlet hat, the laurell'd stave
Are measures, not the springs, of worth;
In a wife's lap, as in a grave,
Man's airy notions mix with earth.
Seek other spur
Bravely to stir

The dust in this loud world, and tread
Alp-high among the whisp'ring dead.

"*Trust in thyself*,—then spur amain :
So shall Charybdis wear a grace,
Grim Ætna laugh, the Lybian plain
Take roses to her shrivell'd face.
This orb—this round
Of sight and sound—
Count it the lists that God hath built
For haughty hearts to ride a-tilt.

"FINIS—Master Tucker's Farewell."

"And a very pretty moral on four gentlemen that pass their afternoon a-setting snails to race!"

At these words, spoken in a delicate foreign voice we all started round : and saw a young lady standing behind us.

Now that she was the one who had passed us in the coach I saw at once. But describe her—to be plain—I cannot, having tried a many times. So let me say only that she was the prettiest creature on God's earth (which, I hope, will satisfy her) ; that she had chestnut curls and a mouth made for laughing ; that she wore a kirtle and bodice of grey silk taffety, with a gold pomander-box hung on a chain about her neck ; and held out a drinking-glass towards us with a Frenchified grace.

"Gentlemen, my father is sick, and will taste no water but what is freshly drawn. I ask you not to brave Charybdis or Ætna, but to step out into the rainy yard and draw me a glass-full from the pump there: for our servant is abroad in the town."

To my deep disgust, before I could find a word, that villainous old pickpocket had caught the glass from her hand and reach'd the door. But I ran after; and out into the yard we stepp'd together, where I pump'd while he held the glass to the spout, flinging away the contents time after time, till the bubbles on the brim, and the film on the outside, were to his liking.

'Twas he, too, that gain'd the thanks on our return.

"Mistress," said he with a bow, "my young friend is raw, but has a good will. Confess, now, for his edification—for he is bound on a long journey westward, where, they tell me, the maidens grow comeliest—that looks avail naught with womankind beside a dashing manner."

The young gentlewoman laughed, shaking her curls.

"I'll give him in that case three better counsels yet: first (for by his habit I see he is on the King's side), let him take a circuit from this place to the south, for the road between Marlboro' and Bristol is, they tell me, all held by the rebels; next, let him avoid all

women, even tho' they ask but an innocent cup of water; and lastly, let him shun thee, unless thy face lie more than thy tongue. Shall I say more?"

"Why, no—perhaps better not," replied the old rogue hastily, but laughing all the same. "That's a clever lass," he added, as the door shut behind her.

And, indeed, I was fain, next morning, to agree to this. For, awaking, I found my friend (who had shar'd a room with me) already up and gone, and discover'd the reason in a sheet of writing pinn'd to my clothes—

"YOUNG SIR,—I convict myself of ingratitude: but habit is hard to break. So I have made off with the half of thy guineas and thy horse. The residue, and the letter thou bearest, I leave. 'Tis a good world, and experience should be bought early. This golden lesson I leave in return for the guineas. Believe me, 'tis of more worth. Read over those verses on the window-pane before starting, digest them, and trust me, thy obliged,

"PETER, THE JACKMAN.

"Raise not thy hand so often to thy breast: 'tis a sure index of hidden valuables."

Be sure I was wroth enough: nor did the calm interest of the two snail-owners appease me, when at breakfast I told them a part of the story. But I thought I read sympathy in the low price at which one of them offer'd me his horse. 'Twas a tall black brute,

very strong in the loins, and I bought him at once out of my shrunken stock of guineas. At ten o'clock, I set out, not along the Bath road, but bearing to the south, as the young gentlewoman had counsel'd. I began to hold a high opinion of her advice.

By twelve o'clock I was back at the inn-door, clamouring to see the man that sold me the horse, which had gone dead lame after the second mile.

"Dear heart!" cried the landlord; "they are gone, the both, this hour and a half. But they are coming again within the fortnight; and I'm expressly to report if you return'd, as they had a wager about it."

I turn'd away, pondering. Two days on the road had put me sadly out of conceit with myself. For mile upon mile I trudged, dragging the horse after me by the bridle, till my arms felt as if coming from their sockets. I would have turn'd the brute loose, and thought myself well quit of him, had it not been for the saddle and bridle he carried.

• • • • •

'Twas about five in the evening, and I still labouring along, when, over the low hedge to my right, a man on a sorrel mare leapt easily as a swallow, and alighted some ten paces or less in front of me; where he dis-

mounted and stood barring my path. The muzzle of his pistol was in my face before I could lay hand to my own.

"Good evening!" said I.

"You have money about you, doubtless," growled the man curtly, and in a voice that made me start. For by his voice and figure in the dusk I knew him for Captain Settle: and in the sorrel with the high white stocking I recognised the mare, Molly, that poor Anthony Killigrew had given me almost with his last breath.

The bully did not know me, having but seen me for an instant at "The Crown," and then in very different attire.

"I have but a few poor coins," I answer'd.

"Then hand 'em over."

"Be shot if I do!" said I in a passion; and pulling out a handful from my pocket, I dash'd them down in the road.

For a moment the Captain took his pistol from my face, and stooped to clutch at the golden coins as they trickled and ran to right and left. The next, I had struck out with my right fist, and down he went staggering. His pistol dropp'd out of his hand and exploded between my feet. I rush'd to Molly, caught

her bridle, and leapt on her back. 'Twas a near thing, for the Captain was rushing towards us. But at the call of my voice the mare gave a bound and turn'd : and down the road I was borne, light as a feather.

A bullet whizz'd past my ear : I heard the Captain's curse mingle with the report : and then was out of range, and galloping through the dusk.

CHAPTER V.

MY ADVENTURE AT THE "THREE CUPS."

SECURE of pursuit, and full of delight in the mare's easy motion, I must have travelled a good six miles before the moon rose. In the frosty sky her rays sparkled cheerfully, and by them I saw on the holsters the silver demi-bear that I knew to be the crest of the Killigrews, having the fellow to it engraved on my sword-hilt. So now I was certain 'twas Molly that I bestrode : and took occasion of the light to explore the holsters and saddle-flap.

Poor Anthony's pistols were gone—filched, no doubt, by the Captain : but you may guess my satisfaction, when on thrusting my hand deeper, I touched a heap of coins, and found them to be gold.

'Twas certainly a rare bargain I had driven with Captain Settle. For the five or six gold pieces I scatter'd on the road, I had won close on thirty guineas, as I counted in the moonlight ; not to speak of this incomparable Molly. And I began to whistle gleefully, and taste the joke over again and laugh to myself, as we cantered along with the north wind at our backs.

A volley of oaths sounded through the buttery-hatch.

"— And that's the true-born Englishmen, as you may tell by their speech. 'Tis pretty company the master keeps, these days."

She was continuing her song, when I held up a finger for silence. In fact, through the hatch my ear had caught a sentence that set me listening for more with a still heart.

"D——n the Captain," the landlord's gruff voice was saying; "I warn'd 'n agen this fancy business when sober, cool-handed work was toward."

"Settle's way from his cradle," growl'd another; "and times enough I've told 'n: 'Cap'n,' says I, 'there's no sense o' proportions about ye.' A master mind, sirs, but 'a 'll be hang'd for a hen-roost, so sure as my name's Bill Widdicomb."

"Ugly words—what a creeping influence has that same mention o' hanging!" piped a thinner voice.

"Hold thy complaints, Old Mortification," put in a speaker that I recognis'd for Black Dick; "sure the pretty maid upstairs is tender game. Hark how they sing!"

And indeed the threaten'd folk upstairs were singing their catch very choicely, with the girl's clear voice to lead them—

"Comment dit papa
—Margoton, ma mie?"

"Heathen language, to be sure," said the thin voice again, as the chorus ceased: "thinks I to myself 'they be but Papisters,' an' my doubting mind is mightily reconcil'd to manslaughter."

"I don't like beginning 'ithout the Cap'n," observed Black Dick: "though I doubt something has miscarried. Else, how did that young spark ride in upon the mare?"

"An' that's what thy question should ha' been, Dick, with a pistol to his skull."

"He'll keep till the morrow."

"We'll give Settle half-an-hour more," said the landlord: "Mary!" he push'd open the hatch, so that I had barely time to duck my head out of view, "fetch in the punch, girl. How did'st leave the young man i' the loft?"

"Asleep, or nearly," answer'd Mary—

"Who hang'd hersel' in her gar-ters,
All for the love o' man —"

"—Anon, anon, master: wait only till I get the kettle on the boil."

The hatch was slipp'd-to again. I stood up and made a step towards the girl.

"How many are they?" I ask'd, jerking a finger in the direction of the parlour.

"A dozen all but one."

"Where is the foreign guests' room?"

"Left hand, on the first landing."

"The staircase?"

"Just outside the door."

"Then sing—go on singing for your life."

"But——"

"Sing!"

"Dear heart, they'll murder thee! Oh! for pity's sake, let go my wrist—

'Lament, ye maids an' darters——'

I stole to the door and peep'd out. A lantern hung in the passage, and showed the staircase directly in front of me. I stay'd for a moment to pull off my boots, and, holding them in my left hand, crept up the stairs. In the kitchen, the girl was singing and clattering the glasses together. Behind the door, at the head of the stairs, I heard voices talk'g. I slipp'd on my boots again and tapp'd on the panel.

"Come in!"

Let me try to describe that on which my eyes rested as I push'd the door wide. 'Twas a long room, wains-

coted half up the wall in some dark wood, and in day-time lit by one window only, which now was hung with red curtains. By the fireplace, where a brisk wood fire was crackling, leant the young gentlewoman I had met at Hungerford, who, as she now turn'd her eyes upon me, ceas'd fingering the guitar or mandoline that she held against her waist, and raised her pretty head not without curiosity.

But 'twas on the table in the centre of the chamber that my gaze settled; and on two men beside it, of whom I must speak more particularly.

The elder, who sat in a high-back'd chair, was a little, frail, deform'd gentleman of about fifty, dress'd very richly in dark velvet and furs, and wore on his head a velvet skull-cap, round which his white hair stuck up like a ferret's. But the oddest thing about him was a complexion that any maid of sixteen would give her ears for—of a pink and white so transparent that it seem'd a soft light must be glowing beneath his skin. On either cheek-bone this delicate colouring centred in a deeper flush. This is as much as I need say about his appearance, except that his eyes were very bright and sharp, and his chin stuck out like a vicious mule's.

The table before him was cover'd with bottles and

flasks, in the middle of which stood a silver lamp burning, and over it a silver saucepan that sent up a rare fragrance as the liquid within it simmer'd and bubbled. So eager was the old gentleman in watching the progress of his mixture, that he merely glanc'd up at my entrance, and then, holding up a hand for silence, turn'd his eyes on the saucepan again.

The second man was the broad-shouldered lackey I had seen riding behind the coach: and now stood over the saucepan with a twisted flask in his hand, from which he pour'd a red syrup very gingerly, drop by drop, with the tail of his eye turn'd on his master's face, that he might know when to cease.

Now it may be that my entrance upset this experiment in strong drinks. At any rate, I had scarce come to a stand about three paces inside the door, when the little old gentleman bounces up in a fury, kicks over his chair, hurls the nearest bottles to right and left, and sends the silver saucepan spinning across the table to my very feet, where it scalded me clean through the boot, and made me hop for pain.

"Spoilt—spoilt!" he scream'd: "drench'd in filthy liqueur, when it should have breath'd but a taste!"

And, to my amazement, he sprang on the strapping servant like a wild cat, and began to beat, cuff,

and belabour him with all the strength of his puny limbs.

'Twas like a scene out of Bedlam. Yet all the while the girl leant quietly against the mantelshelf, and softly touched the strings of her instrument; while the servant took the rain of blows and slaps as though 'twere a summer shower, grinning all over his face, and making no resistance at all.

Then, as I stood dumb with perplexity, the old gentleman let go his hold of the fellow's hair, and, dropping on the floor, began to roll about in a fit of coughing, the like of which no man can imagine. 'Twas hideous. He bark'd, and writhed, and bark'd again, till the disorder seem'd to search and rack every innermost inch of his small frame. And in the intervals of coughing his exclamations were terrible to listen to.

"He's dying!" I cried; and ran forward to help.

The servant pick'd up the chair, and together we set him in it. By degrees the violence of the cough abated, and he lay back, livid in the face, with his eyes closed, and his hands clutching the knobs of the chair. I turn'd to the girl. She had neither spoken nor stirr'd, but now came forward, and calmly ask'd my business.

"I think," said I, "that your name is Killigrew?"

"I am Delia Killigrew, and this is my father, Sir Deakin."

"Now on his way to visit his estates in Cornwall?"

She nodded.

"Then I have to warn you that your lives are in danger." And, gently as possible, I told her what I had seen and heard downstairs. In the middle of my tale, the servant stepp'd to the door, and return'd quietly. There was no lock on the inside. After a minute he went across, and drew the red curtains. The window had a grating within, of iron bars as thick as a man's thumb, strongly clamp'd in the stonework, and not four inches apart. Clearly, he was a man of few words; for, returning, he merely pull'd out his sword, and waited for the end of my tale.

The girl, also, did not interrupt me, but listen'd in silence. As I ceas'd, she said—

"Is this all you know?"

"No," answer'd I, "it is not. But the rest I promise to tell you if we escape from this place alive. Will this content you?"

She turn'd to the servant, who nodded. Whereupon she held out her hand very cordially.

"Sir, listen: we are travellers bound for Cornwall,

as you know, and have some small possessions, that will poorly reward the greed of these violent men. Nevertheless, we should be hurrying on our journey did we not await my brother Anthony, who was to have ridden from Oxford to join us here, but has been delayed, doubtless on the King's business——"

She broke off, as I started: for below I heard the main door open, and Captain Settle's voice in the passage. The arch-villain had return'd.

"Mistress Delia," I said hurriedly, "the twelfth man has enter'd the house, and unless we consider our plans at once, all's up with us."

"Tush!" said the old gentleman in the chair, who (it seems) had heard all, and now sat up brisk as ever. "I, for my part shall mix another glass, and leave it all to Jacques. Come, sit by me, sir, and you shall see some pretty play. Why, Jacques is the neatest rogue with a small-sword in all France!"

"Sir," I put in, "they are a round dozen in all, and your life at present is not worth a penny's purchase."

"That's a lie! 'Tis worth this bowl before me, that, with or without you, I mean to empty. What a fool-thing is youth! Sir, you must be a dying man like myself to taste life properly." And, as I am a truthful man, he struck up quavering merrily—

"Hey, nonni—nonni—no !
Men are fools that wish to die !
Is't not fine to laugh and sing
When the bells of death do ring ?
Is't not fine to drown in wine,
And turn upon the toe,
And sing, hey—nonni—no ?
Hey, nonni—nonni——"

"—Come and sit, sir, nor spoil sport. You are too raw, I'll wager, to be of any help ; and boggling I detest."

"Indeed, sir," I broke in, now thoroughly anger'd,
"I can use the small-sword as well as another."

"Tush ! Try him, Jacques."

Jacques, still wearing a stolid face, brought his weapon to the guard. Stung to the quick, I wheel'd round, and made a lunge or two, that he put aside as easily as though I were a babe. And then—I know not how it happen'd, but my sword slipp'd like ice out of my grasp, and went flying across the room. Jacques, sedately as on a matter of business, stepp'd to pick it up, while the old gentleman chuckled.

I was hot and asham'd, and a score of bitter words sprang to my tongue-tip, when the Frenchman, as he rose from stooping, caught my eye, and beckon'd me across to him.

He was white as death, and pointed to the hilt of my sword and the demi-bear engrav'd thereon.

"He is dead," I whisper'd: "hush!—turn your face aside—killed by those same dogs that are now below."

I heard a sob in the true fellow's throat. But on the instant it was drown'd by the sound of a door opening and the tramp of feet on the stairs.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FLIGHT IN THE PINE WOOD.

By the sound of their steps I guess'd one or two of these dozen rascals to be pretty far gone in drink, and afterwards found this to be the case. I look'd round. Sir Deakin had pick'd up the lamp and was mixing his bowl of punch, humming to himself without the least concern—

“Vivre en tout cas
C'est le grand soulas”—

with a glance at his daughter's face, that was white to the lips, but firmly set.

“Hand me the nutmeg yonder,” he said, and then, “Why, daughter, what's this?—a trembling hand?”

And all the while the footsteps were coming up.

There was a loud knock on the door.

“Come in!” call'd Sir Deakin.

At this, Jacques, who stood ready for battle by the entrance, wheeled round, shot a look at his master, and dropping his point, made a sign to me to do the same. The door was thrust rudely open, and Captain Settle, his hat cock'd over one eye, and sham drunkenness in

his gait, lurch'd into the room, with the whole villainous crew behind him, huddled on the threshold. Jacques and I stepp'd quietly back, so as to cover the girl.

"Would you mind waiting a moment?" enquir'd Sir Deakin, without looking up, but rubbing the nutmeg calmly up and down the grater: "a fraction too much, and the whole punch will be spoilt."

It took the Captain aback, and he came to a stand, eyeing us, who look'd back at him without saying a word. And this discompos'd him still further.

There was a minute during which the two parties could hear each other's breathing. Sir Deakin set down the nutmeg, wiped his thin white fingers on a napkin, and address'd the Captain sweetly—

"Before asking your business, sir, I would beg you and your company to taste this liquor, which, in the court of France"—the old gentleman took a sip from the mixing ladle—"has had the extreme honour to be pronounced divine." He smack'd his lips, and rising to his feet, let his right hand rest on the silver foot of the lamp as he bowed to the Captain.

Captain Settle's bravado was plainly oozing away before this polite audacity: and seeing Sir Deakin taste the punch, he pull'd off his cap in a shame-faced manner and sat down by the table with a word of thanks.

"Come in, sirs—come in!" call'd the old gentleman; "and follow your friend's example. 'Twill be a compliment to make me mix another bowl when this is finish'd." He stepp'd around the table to welcome them, still resting his hand on the lamp, as if for steadiness. I saw his eye twinkle as they shuffled in and stood around the chair where the Captain was seated.

"Jacques, bring glasses from the cupboard yonder! And, Delia, fetch up some chairs for our guests—no, sirs, pray do not move!"

He had waved his hand lightly to the door as he turned to us: and in an instant the intention as well as the bright success of this comedy flash'd upon me. There was now no one between us and the stairs, and as for Sir Deakin himself, he had already taken the step of putting the table's width between him and his guests.

I touch'd the girl's arm, and we made as if to fetch a couple of chairs that stood against the wainscot by the door. As we did so, Sir Deakin push'd the punch-bowl forward under the Captain's nose.

"Smell, sir," he cried airily, "and report to your friends on the foretaste."

Settle's nose hung over the steaming compound.

With a swift pass of the hand, the old gentleman caught up the lamp and had shaken a drop of burning oil into the bowl. A great blaze leapt to the ceiling. There was a howl—a scream of pain; and as I push'd Mistress Delia through the doorway and out to the head of the stairs, I caught a backward glimpse of Sir Deakin rushing after us, with one of the stoutest among the robbers at his heels.

"Downstairs, for your life!" I whisper'd to the girl, and turning, as her father tumbled past me, let his pursuer run on my sword, as on a spit. At the same instant, another blade pass'd through the fellow transversely, and Jacques stood beside me, with his back to the lintel.

As we pull'd our swords out and the man dropp'd, I had a brief view into the room, where now the blazing liquid ran off the table in a stream. Settle, stamping with agony, had his palms press'd against his scorch'd eyelids. The fat landlord, in trying to beat out the flames, had increased them by upsetting two bottles of aqua vitæ, and was dancing about with three fingers in his mouth. The rest stood for the most part dumb-founder'd: but Black Dick had his pistol lifted.

Jacques and I sprang out for the landing and round the doorway. Between the flash and the reprot I felt a

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swing my arms for warmth, and breathe on my fingers, that were sorely benumb'd; and all the while kept my ears on the alert, but heard nothing.

'Twas, as I said, something over two hours after, that I felt a soft cold touch, and then another, like kisses on my forehead. I put up my hand, and looked up again at the sky. As I did so, the girl gave a long sigh, and awoke from her doze—

"Sure, I must have dropp'd asleep," she said, opening her eyes, and spying my shadow above her: "has aught happened?"

"Aye," replied I, "something is happening that will wipe out our traces and my bloody track."

"And what is that?"

"Snow: see, 'tis falling fast."

She bent over, and listen'd to her father's breathing.

"'Twill kill him," she said simply.

I pull'd some more fronds of the bracken to cover them both. She thank'd me, and offer'd to relieve me in my watch: which I refus'd. And indeed, by lying down I should have caught my death, very likely.

The big flakes drifted down between the pines: till, as the moon paled, the ground about me was carpeted all in white, with the foliage black as ink above it. Time after time, as I tramp'd to and fro, I paus'd to

brush the fresh-forming heap from the sleepers' coverlet, and shake it gently from the tresses of the girl's hair. The old man's face was covered completely by the buff-coat : but his breathing was calm and regular as any child's.

Day dawn'd. Awaking Mistress Delia, I ask'd her to keep watch for a time, while I went off to explore. She crept out from her bed with a little shiver of disgust.

"Run about," I advis'd, "and keep the blood stirring."

She nodded : and looking back, as I strode down the hill, I saw her moving about quickly, swinging her arms, and only pausing to wave a hand to me for good-speed.

* * * * *

'Twas an hour before I return'd : and plenty I had to tell. Only at the entrance to the dingle the words failed from off my tongue. The old gentleman lay as he had lain throughout the night. But the bracken had been toss'd aside, and the girl was kneeling over him. I drew near, my step not arousing her. Sir Deakin's face was pale and calm : but on the snow that had gather'd by his head, lay a red streak of blood. 'Twas from his lungs, and he was quite dead.

CHAPTER VII.

I FIND A COMRADE.

BUT I must go back a little and tell you what befell in my expedition.

I had scarce trudged out of sight of my friends, down the hill, when it struck me that my footprints in the snow were in the last degree dangerous to them, and might lead Settle and his crew straight to the dingle. Here was a fix. I stood for some minutes nonpluss'd, when above the stillness of the wood (for the wind had dropp'd) a faint sound as of running water caught my ear, and help'd me to an idea.

The sound seem'd to come from my left. Turning aside I made across the hill towards it, and after two hundred paces or so came on a tiny brook, not two feet across, that gush'd down the slope with a quite considerable chatter and impatience. The bed of it was mainly earth, with here and there a large stone or root to catch the toe : so that, as I stepp'd into the water and began to thread my way down between the banks of snow, 'twas necessary to look carefully to my steps.

Here and there the brook fetch'd a leap down a

sharper declivity, or shot over a hanging stone: but, save for the wetting I took in these places, my progress was easy enough. I must have waded in this manner for half a mile, keeping the least possible noise, when at an angle ahead I spied a clearing among the pines, and to the right of the stream, on the very verge, a hut of logs standing, with a woodrick behind it.

'Twas a low building, but somewhat long, and I guess'd it to be, in summer-time, a habitation for the wood-cutters. But what surpris'd me was to hear a dull, moaning noise, very regular and disquieting, that sounded from the interior of the hut. I listen'd, and hit on the explication. 'Twas the sound of snoring.

Drawing nearer with caution, I noticed, in that end of the hut which stood over the stream, a gap, or window hole. The sound issued through this like the whirring of a dozen looms. "He must be an astonishing fellow," thought I, "that can snore in this fashion. I'll have a peep before I wake him." I waded down till I stood under the sill, put both hands upon it, and pulling myself up quiet as a mouse, stuck my face in at the window—and then very nearly sat back into the brook for fright.

For I had gazed straight down into the upturn'd faces of Captain Settle and his gang.

How long I stood there, with the water rushing past my ankles and my body turning from cold to hot, and back again, I cannot tell you. But 'twas until, hearing no pause in the sleepers' chorus, I found courage for another peep: and that must have been some time.

There were but six rascals besides the Captain (so that Jacques must have died hard, thought I), and such a raffle of arms and legs and swollen upturn'd faces as they made I defy you to picture. For they were pack'd close as herrings; and the hut was fill'd up with their horses, ready saddled, and rubbing shoulder to loin, so narrow was the room. It needed the open window to give them air: and even so, 'twas not over-fresh inside.

I had no mind to stay: but before leaving found myself in the way of playing these villains a pretty trick. To right and left of the window, above their heads, extended two rude shelves that now were heap'd with what I conjectured to be the spoils of the larder of the "Three Cups." Holding my breath and thrusting my head and shoulders into the room, I ran my hand along and was quickly possess'd of a boil'd ham, two capons, a loaf, the half of a cold pie, and a basket holding three dozen eggs. All these prizes I filched one by one, with infinite caution.

I was gently pulling the basket through the

window hole, when I heard one of the crew yawn and stretch himself in his sleep. So, determining to risk no more, I quietly pack'd the basket, slung it on my right arm, and with the ham grasp'd by the knuckle in my left, made my way up the stream.

'Twas thus laden that I enter'd the dingle, and came on the sad sight therein. I set down the ham as a thing to be ashamed of, and bar'd my head. The girl lifted her face, and turning, all white and tragical, saw me.

"My father is dead, sir."

I stoop'd and pil'd a heap of fresh snow over the blood stains. There was no intent in this but to hide the pity that chok'd me. She had still to hear about her brother, Anthony. Turning, as by a sudden thought, I took her hand. She look'd into my eyes, and her own filled with tears. 'Twas the human touch that loosen'd their flow, I think: and sinking down again beside her father, she wept her fill.

"Mistress Killigrew," I said, as soon as the first violence of her tears was abated, "I have still some news that is ill hearing. Your enemies are encamp'd in the woods, about a half-mile below this"—and with that I told my story.

"They have done their worst, sir."

setting me down for an ingrate ;” and told her of the King’s letter that I carried. “I hoped that for a while our ways might lie together,” said I ; and broke off, for she was looking me earnestly in the face.

“Sir, as you know, my brother Anthony was to have met me—nay, for pity’s sake, turn not your face away ! I have guess’d—the sword you carry—I mark’d it. Sir, be merciful, and tell me !”

I led her a little aside to the foot of a tall pine ; and there, tho’ it wrung my heart, told her all ; and left her to wrestle with this final sorrow. She was so tender a thing to be stricken thus, that I who had dealt the blow crept back to the hut, covering my eyes. In an hour’s time I look’d out. She was gone.

At nightfall she return’d, white with grief and fatigue ; yet I was glad to see her eyes red and swol’n with weeping. Throughout our supper she kept silence ; but when ’twas over, look’d up and spoke in a steady tone—

“Sir, I have a favour to ask, and must risk being held importunate——”

“From you to me,” I put in, “all talk of favours had best be dropp’d.”

“No—listen. If ever it befel you to lose father or mother or dearly loved friend, you will know how the

anguish stuns—Oh sir! to-day the sun seem'd fallen out of heaven, and I a blind creature left groping in the void. Indeed, sir, 'tis no wonder: I had a father, brother, and servant ready to die for me—three hearts to love and lean on: and to-day they are gone.”

I would have spoken, but she held up a hand.

“Now when you spoke of Anthony—a dear lad!—I lay for some time dazed with grief. By little and little, as the truth grew plainer, the pain grew also past bearing. I stood up and stagger'd into the woods to escape it. I went fast and straight, heeding nothing, for at first my senses were all confus'd: but in a while the walking clear'd my wits, and I could think: and thinking, I could weep: and having wept, could fortify my heart. Here is the upshot, sir—tho' 'tis held immodest for a maid to ask even far less of a man. We are both bound for Cornwall—you on an honourable mission, I for my father's estate of Gleys, wherefrom (as your tale proves) some unseen hands are thrusting me. Alike we carry our lives in our hands. You must go forward: I may not go back. For from a King who cannot right his own affairs there is little hope; and in Cornwall I have surer friends than he. Therefore take me, sir—take me for a comrade! Am I sad? Do you fear a weary journey? I will smile—laugh—sing—put

sorrow behind me. I will contrive a thousand ways to cheat the milestones. At the first hint of tears, discard me, and go your way with no prick of conscience. Only try me—oh, the shame of speaking thus ! ”

Her voice had grown more rapid towards the close : and now, breaking off, she put both hands to cover her face, that was hot with blushes. I went over and took them in mine :

“ You have made me the blithest man alive,” said I.

She drew back a pace with a frighten’d look, and would have pull’d her hands away.

“ Because,” I went on quickly, “ you have paid me this high compliment, to trust me. Proud was I to listen to you ; and merrily will the miles pass with you for comrade. And so I say—Mistress Killigrew, take me for your servant.”

To my extreme discomposure, as I dropp’d her hands, her eyes were twinkling with laughter.

“ Dear now ; I see a dull prospect ahead if we use these long titles ! ”

“ But——”

“ Indeed, sir, please yourself. Only as I intend to call you ‘ Jack,’ perhaps ‘ Delia ’ will be more of a piece than ‘ Mistress Killigrew.’ ” She dropp’d me a mock

curtsey. "And now, Jack, be a good boy, and hitch me this quilt across the hut. I bought it yesterday at a cottage below here——"

She ended the sentence with the prettiest blush imaginable; and so, having fix'd her screen, we shook hands on our comradeship, and wish'd each other good-night.

CHAPTER VIII.

I LOSE THE KING'S LETTER; AND AM CARRIED TO
BRISTOL.

ALMOST before daylight we were afoot, and the first ray of cold sunshine found us stepping from the woods into the plain, where now the snow was vanish'd and a glistening coat of rime spread over all things. Down here the pines gave way to bare elms and poplars, thickly dotted, and among them the twisting smoke of farmstead and cottage, here and there, and the morning stir of kitchen and stable very musical in the crisp air.

Delia stepp'd along beside me, humming an air or breaking off to chatter. Meeting us, you would have said we had never a care. The road went stretching away to the north-west and the hills against the sky there; whither beyond, we neither knew nor (being both young, and one, by this time, pretty deep in love) did greatly care. Yet meeting with a waggoner and his team, we drew up to enquire.

The waggoner had a shock of whitish hair and a face purple-red above, by reason of the cold, and purple-

black below, for lack of a barber. He purs'd up his mouth and look'd us slowly up and down.

"Come," said I, "you are not deaf, I hope, nor dumb."

"Send I may niver!" the fellow ejaculated, slowly and with contemplation: "'tis an unseemly sight, yet tickling to the mirthfully minded. Haw—haw!" He check'd his laughter suddenly and stood like a stone image beside his horses.

"Good sir," said Delia, laying a hand on my arm (for I was growing nettled), "your mirth is a riddle: but tell us our way and you are free to laugh."

"Oh, Scarlet—Scarlet!" answer'd he: "and to me, that am a man o' blushes from my cradle!"

Convinc'd by this that the fellow must be an idiot, I told him so, and left him staring after us; nor heard the sound of his horses moving on again for many minutes.

After this we met about a dozen on the road, and all paus'd to stare. But from one—an old woman—we learn'd we were walking towards Marlboro', and about noon were over the hills and looking into the valley beyond.

'Twas very like the other vale; only a pleasant stream wound along the bottom, by the banks of which

the garrison of the Parliament, which they did this same night, with great slaughter, driving the rebels out of the place, and back on the road to Bristol. Had we guess'd this, much ill-luck had been spared us; but we knew nought of it, nor whether friends or foes were getting the better. So (Delia being by this time recover'd a little) we determin'd to pass the night in the woods, and on the morrow to give the place a wide berth.

Retreating, then, to the hollow (that lay on the lee-side of the ridge, away from the north wind), I gather'd a pile of great stones, and spread my cloak thereover for Delia. To sleep was impossible, even with the will for it. For the tumult and fighting went on, and only died out about an hour before dawn: and once or twice we were troubled to hear the sound of people running on the ridge above. So we sat and talked in low voices till dawn; and grew more desperately hunger'd than ever.

With the chill of daybreak we started, meaning to get quit of the neighbourhood before any espied us; and fetch'd a compass to the south without another look at Marlboro'. At the end of two hours, turning north-west again, we came to some water-meadows beside a tiny river (the Kennet, as I think), and saw,

some way beyond, a high road that cross'd to our side (only the bridge was now broken down), and further yet, a thick smoke curling up; but whence this came I could not see. Now we had been avoiding all roads this morning, and hiding at every sound of footsteps. But hunger was making us bold. I bade Delia crouch down by the stream's bank, where many alders grew, and set off towards this column of smoke.

By the spot where the road cross'd I noted that many men and horses had lately pass'd hereby to westward, and, by their footmarks, at a great speed. A little further, and I came on a broken musket flung against the hedge, with a nauseous mess of blood and sandy hairs about the stock of it; and just beyond was a dead horse, his legs sticking up like bent poles across the road. 'Twas here that my blood went cold on a sudden, to hear a dismal groaning not far ahead. I stood still, holding my breath, and then ran forward again.

The road took a twist that led me face to face with a small whitewashed cottage, smear'd with black stains of burning. For seemingly it had been fir'd in one or two places, only the flames had died out: and from the back, where some outbuilding yet smoulder'd, rose the smoke that I spied. But what brought me to a stand

was to see the doorway all crack'd and charr'd, and across it a soldier stretch'd—a green-coated rebel—and quite dead. His face lay among the burnt ruins of the door, that had wofully singed his beard and hair. A stain of blood ran across the door-stone and into the road.

I was gazing upon him and shuddering, when again I heard the groans. They issued from the upper chamber of the cottage. I stepp'd over the dead soldier and mounted the ladder that led upstairs.

The upper room was but a loft. In it were two beds, whereof one was empty. On the edge of the other sat up a boy of sixteen or thereabouts, stark naked and moaning miserably. With one hand he seem'd trying to cover a big wound that gaped in his chest: the other, as my head rose over the ladder, he stretch'd out with all the fingers spread. And this was his last effort. As I stumbled up, his fingers clos'd in a spasm of pain; his hands dropp'd, and the body tumbled back on the bed, where it lay with the legs dangling.

The poor lad must have been stabb'd as he lay asleep. For by the bedside I found his clothes neatly folded and without a speck of blood. They were clean, though coarse; so thinking they would serve for Delia,

I took them, albeit with some scruples at robbing the dead, and covering the body with a sheet, made my way downstairs.

Here, on a high shelf at the foot of the ladder, I discover'd a couple of loaves and some milk, and also, lying hard by, a pair of shepherd's shears, which I took also, having a purpose for them. By this time, being sick enough of the place, I was glad to make all speed back to Delia.

She was still waiting among the leafless alders, and clapp'd her hands to see the two loaves under my arm.

Said I, flinging down the clothes, and munching at my share of the bread—

“Here is the boy's suit that you wish'd for.”

“Oh, dear! 'tis not a very choice one.” Her face fell.

“All the better for escaping notice.”

“But—but I *like* to be notic'd!”

Nevertheless, when breakfast was done, she consented to try on the clothes. I left her eyeing them doubtfully, and stroll'd away by the river's bank. In a while her voice call'd to me—

“Oh, Jack—they do not fit at all!”

“Why, 'tis admirable!” said I, returning, and

was standing beside Delia, under guard of a dozen soldiers, and shaking with cold, beneath a gateway that led between the two wards of the castle. And there, for an hour at least, we kick'd our heels, until from the inner ward Captain Stubbs came striding and commanded us to follow.

Across the court we went in the rain, through a vaulted passage, and passing a screen of carved oak found ourselves suddenly in a great hall, near forty yards long (as I reckon it), and rafter'd with oak. At the far end, around a great marble table, were some ten or more gentlemen seated, who all with one accord turn'd their eyes upon us, as the captain brought us forward.

The table before them was litter'd with maps, warrants, and papers ; and some of the gentlemen had pens in their hands. But the one on whom my eyes fasten'd was a tall, fair soldier that sat in the centre, and held his Majesty's letter, open, in his hand : who rose and bow'd to me as I came near.

"Sir," he said, "the fortune of war having given you into our hands, you will not refuse, I hope, to answer our questions."

"Sir, I have nought to tell," answer'd I, bowing in return.

With a delicate white hand he wav'd my words aside. He had a handsome, irresolute mouth, and was, I could tell, of very different degree from the merchants and lawyers beside him.

"You act under orders from the—the——"

"Anti-Christ," put in a snappish little fellow on his right.

"I do nothing of the sort," said I.

"Well, then, sir, from King Charles."

"I do not."

"Tush!" exclaim'd the snappish man, and then straightening himself up—"That boy with you—that fellow disguis'd as a countryman—look at his boots!—he's a Papist spy!"

"There, sir, you are wrong!"

"I saw him—I'll be sworn to his face—I saw him, a year back, at Douai, helping at the mass! I never forget faces."

"Why, what nonsense!" cried I, and burst out laughing.

"Don't mock at me, sir!" he thunder'd, bringing down his fist on the table. "I tell you the boy is a Papist!" He pointed furiously at Delia, who, now laughing also, answer'd him very demurely—

"Indeed, sir——"

"I saw you, I say."

"You are bold to make so certain of a Papist——"

"I saw you!"

"That cannot even tell maid from man!"

"What is meant by that?" asks the tall soldier, opening his eyes.

"Why, simply this, sir: I am no boy at all, but a girl!"

There was a minute, during which the little man went purple in the face, and the rest star'd at Delia in blank astonishment.

"Oh, Jack," she whisper'd in my ear, "I am so very, very sorry: but I *cannot* wear these hateful clothes much longer."

She fac'd the company with a rosy blush.

"What say you to this?" ask'd Colonel Essex—for 'twas he—turning round on the little man.

"Say? What do I say? That the fellow is a Papist, too. I knew it from the first, and this proves it!"

CHAPTER IX.

I BREAK OUT OF PRISON.

You are now to be ask'd to pass over the next four weeks in as many minutes: as would I had done at the time! For I spent them in a bitter cold cell in the main tower of Bristol keep, with a chair and a pallet of straw for all my furniture, and nothing to stay my fast but the bread and water that the jailor—a sour man, if ever there were one—brought me twice a day.

This keep lies in the north-west corner of the outer ward of the castle—a mighty tall pile and strongly built, the walls (as the jailor told me) being a full twenty-five feet thick near the foundations, tho' by time you ascended to the towers this thickness had dwindled to six feet and no more. In shape 'twas a quadrilateral, a little shorter from north to south than from east to west (in which latter direction it measur'd sixty feet, about), and had four towers standing at the four corners, whereof mine was five fathoms higher than the rest.

Guess, then, how little I thought of escape, having but one window, a hundred feet (I do believe) above the

ground, and that so narrow that, even without the iron bar across it, 'twould barely let my shoulders pass. What concern'd me more was the cold that gnaw'd me continually these winter nights, as I lay thinking of Delia (whom I had not seen since our examination), or gazing out on the patch of frosty heaven that was all my view. 'Twas thus I had heard Bristol bells ringing for Christmas in the town below.

Colonel Essex had been thrice to visit me, and always offer'd many excuses for my treatment; but when he came to question me, why of course I had nothing to tell, so that each visit but served to vex him more. Clearly I was suspected to know a great deal beyond what appear'd in the letter: and no doubt poor Anthony Killigrew had receiv'd some verbal message from His Majesty which he lived not long enough to transmit to me. As 'twas, I kept silence; and the Colonel in return would tell me nothing of what had befallen Delia.

One fine, frosty morning, then, when I had lain in this distress just four weeks, the door of my cell open'd, and there appear'd a young woman, not uncomely, bringing in my bread and water. She was the jailor's daughter, and wore a heavy bunch of keys at her girdle.

"Oh, good morning!" said I: for till now her father only had visited me, and this was a welcome change.

Instead of answering cheerfully (as I look'd for), she gave a little nod of the head, rather sorrowful, and answer'd—

"Father's abed with the ague."

"Now you cannot expect me to be sorry."

"Nay," she said; and I caught her looking at me with something like compassion in her blue eyes, which mov'd me to cry out suddenly—

"I think you are woman enough to like a pair of lovers."

"Oh, aye: but where's t'other half of the pair?"

"You're right. The young gentlewoman that was brought hither with me—I know not if she loves me: but this I do know—I would give my hand to learn her whereabouts, and how she fares."

"Better eat thy loaf," put in the girl very suddenly, setting down the plate and pitcher.

'Twas odd, but I seem'd to hear a sob in her voice. However, her back was towards me as I glanc'd up. And next moment she was gone, locking the iron door behind her.

I turn'd from my breakfast with a sigh, having for

"The gug-gug——"

"Gallows?"

She nodded.

"You are but a weak girl," said I, meditating.

"Aye: but there's a dozen troopers on the landing below."

"Then, my dear, you must lock me up," I decided gloomily, and fell to whistling—

"Vivre en tout cas,
C'est le grand soulas——"

A workman's hammer in the court below chim'd in, beating out the tune, and driving the moral home. I heard a low sob behind me. The jailor's daughter was going.

"Lend me your bodkin, my dear, for a memento."

She pull'd it out and gave it to me.

"Thank you, and now good-bye! Stop: here's a kiss to take to my dear mistress. They shan't hang me, my dear."

The girl went out, sobbing, and lock'd the door after her.

I sat down for a while, feeling doleful. For I found myself extremely young to be hang'd. But soon the *whang—whang!* of the hammer below rous'd me.

"Come," I thought, "I'll see what that rascal is doing, at any rate," and pulling the file from my pocket, began to attack the window-bar with a will. I had no need for silence, at this great height above the ground : and besides, the hammering continued lustily.

Daylight was closing as I finish'd my task and, pulling the two pieces of the bar aside, thrust my head out at the window.

Directly under me, and about twenty feet from the ground, I saw a beam projecting, about six feet long, over a sort of doorway in the wall. Under this beam, on a ladder, was a carpenter-fellow at work, fortifying it with two supporting timbers that rested on the sill of the doorway. He was merry enough over the job, and paused every now and again to fling a remark to a little group of soldiers that stood idling below, where the fellow's work-bag and a great coil of rope rested by the ladder's foot.

"Reckon, Sammy," said one, pulling a long tobacco pipe from his mouth and spitting, "'tis a long while since thy last job o' the sort."

"Aye, lad : terrible disrepair this place has fall'n into. But send us a cheerful heart, say I ! Instead o' the viper an' owl, shall henceforward be hangings of men an' all manner o' diversion."

I kept my head out of sight and listen'd.

"What time doth 'a swing?" ask'd another of the soldiers.

"I heard the Colonel give orders for nine o'clock to-morrow," answer'd the first soldier, spitting again.

The clock over the barbican struck four: and in a minute was being answer'd from tower after tower, down in the city.

"Four o'clock!" cried the man on the ladder: "time to stop work, and here goes for the last nail!" He drove it in and prepar'd to descend.

"Hi!" shouted a soldier, "you've forgot the rope."

"That'll wait till to-morrow. There's a staple to drive in, too. I tell you I'm dry, and want my beer."

He whipt his apron round his waist, and gathering up his nails, went down the ladder. At the foot he pick'd up his bag, shoulder'd the ladder, and loung'd away, leaving the coil of rope lying there. Presently the soldiers saunter'd off also, and the court was empty.

Now up to this moment I had but one idea of avoiding my fate, and that was to kill myself. 'Twas to this end I had borrow'd the bodkin of the maid. Afterwards I had a notion of flinging myself from the window as they came for me. But now, as I look'd down on that coil of rope lying directly below, a

prettier scheme struck me. I sat down on the floor of my cell and pull'd off my boots and stockings.

'Twas such a pretty plan that I got into a fever of impatience. Drawing off a stocking and picking out the end of the yarn, I began to unravel the knitting for dear life, until the whole lay, a heap of thread, on the floor. I then serv'd the other in the same way: and at the end had two lines, each pretty near four hundred yards in length: which now I divided into eight lines of about a hundred yards each.

With these I set to work, and by the end of twenty minutes had plaited a rope—if rope, indeed, it could be called—weak to be sure, but long enough to reach the ground with plenty to spare. Then, having bent my bodkin to the form of a hook, I tied it to the end of my cord, weighted it with a crown from my pocket, and clamber'd up to the window. I was going to angle for the hangman's rope.

'Twas near dark by this; but I could just distinguish it on the paving-stones below, and looking about the court, saw that no one was astir. I wriggled first my head, then a shoulder, through the opening, and let the line run gently through my hand. There was still many yards left, that could be paid out, when I heard my coin tinkle softly on the pavement.

Then began my difficulty. A dozen times I pull'd my hook across the coil before it hitch'd; and then a full three score of times the rope slipped away before I had rais'd it a dozen yards. My elbow was raw, almost, with leaning on the sill, and I began to lose heart and head, when, to my delight, the bodkin caught and held. It had fasten'd on a kink in the rope, not far from the end. I began to pull up, hand over hand, trembling all the while like a leaf.

For I had two very reasonable fears. First, the rope might slip away and tumble before it reach'd my grasp. Secondly, it might, after all, prove a deal too short. It had look'd to me a new rope of many fathoms, not yet cut for to-morrow's purpose; but eyesight might well deceive at that distance, and surely enough I saw that the whole was dangling off the ground long before it came to my hand.

But at last I caught it, and slipping back into the room, pull'd it after me, yard upon yard. My heart went loud and fast. There was nothing to fasten it to but an iron staple in the door, that meant losing the width of my cell, some six feet. This, however, must be risk'd, and I made the end fast, lower'd the other out of window again, and climbing to a sitting posture on the window-sill, thrust out my legs over the gulf.

Thankful was I that darkness had fallen before this, and hidden the giddy depths below me. I gripp'd the rope and push'd myself inch by inch through the window, and out over the ledge. For a moment I dangled, without courage to move a hand. Then, wreathing my legs round the rope, I loosed my left hand, and caught with it again some six inches lower. And so, down I went.

Minute follow'd minute, and left me still descending, six inches at a time, and looking neither above nor below, but always at the gray wall that seem'd sliding up in front of me. The first dizziness was over, but a horrible aching of the arms had taken the place of it. 'Twas growing intolerable, when suddenly my legs, that sought to close round the rope, found space only. I had come to the end.

I look'd down. A yard below my feet the beam of the gallows gleam'd palely out of the darkness. Here was my chance. I let my hands slip down the last foot or so of rope, hung for a moment, then dropp'd for the beam.

My feet miss'd it, as I intended they should ; but I flung both arms out and caught it, bringing myself up with a jerk. While yet I hung clawing, I heard a footstep coming through the gateway between the two wards.

blaze fell on me as I stood. Under the first flight, close to my left shoulder, was a line of pegs with many cloaks and hats depending therefrom. Underfoot, I remember, the hall was richly tiled in squares of red and white marble.

Now clearly, this was a certain place wherein to be caught. "But," thought I, "behind one of the two doors, to left or to right, must lie the governor's room of business; and in that room—as likely as not—his keys." Which door, then, should I choose? For to stay here was madness.

While I stood pondering, the doubt was answer'd for me. From behind the right-hand door came a burst of laughter and clinking of glasses, on top of which a man's voice—the voice of Colonel Essex—call'd out for more wine.

I took a step to the door on the left, paus'd for a second or two with my hand on the latch, and then cautiously push'd it open. The chamber was empty.

'Twas a long room, with a light burning on a square centre table, and around it a mass of books, loose papers and documents strewn, seemingly without order. The floor too was litter'd with them. Clearly this was the Colonel's office.

I gave a rapid glance around. The lamp's rays

scarce illumin'd the far corners; but in one of these stood a great leathern screen, and over the fireplace near it a rack was hanging, full of swords, pistols, and walking canes. Stepping towards it I caught sight of Anthony's sword, suspended there amongst the rest (they had taken it from me on the day of my examination); which now I took down and strapp'd at my side. I then chose out a pistol or two, slipt them into my sash, and advanced to the centre table.

Under the lamp light lay His Majesty's letter, open.

My hand was stretch'd out to catch it up, when I heard across the hall a door open'd, and the sound of men's voices. They were coming towards the office.

There was scarce time to slip back, and hide behind the screen, before the door-latch was lifted, and two men enter'd, laughing yet.

"Business, my lord—business," said the first ('twas Colonel Essex): "I have much to do to-night."

"Sure," the other answer'd, "I thought we had settled it. You are to lend me a thousand out of your garrison——"

"Which, on my own part, I would willingly do. Only I beg you to consider, my lord, that my position here hangs on a thread. The extreme men are already against me: they talk of replacing me by Fiennes——"

"Nat Fiennes is no soldier."

"No: but he's a bigot—a stronger recommendation. Should this plan miscarry, and I lose a thousand men——"

"Heavens alive, man! It *cannot* miscarry. Hark ye: there's Ruthen of Plymouth will take the south road with all his forces. A day's march behind I shall follow—along roads to northward—parallel for a way, but afterwards converging. The Cornishmen are all in Bodmin. We shall come on them with double their number, aye, almost treble. Can you doubt the issue?"

"Scarcely, with the Earl of Stamford for General."

The Earl was too far occupied to notice this compliment.

"'Twill be swift and secret," he said, "as Death himself—and as sure. Let be the fact that Hopton is all at sixes and sevens since the Marquis shipp'd for Wales: and at daggers drawn with Mohun."

Said the Colonel slowly—"Aye, the notion is good enough. Were I not in this corner, I would not think twice. Listen now: only this morning they forc'd me to order a young man's hanging, who might if kept alive be forc'd in time to give us news of value. I dar'd not refuse."

"He that you caught with the King's letter?"

"Aye—a trumpery missive, dealing with naught but summoning of the sheriff's *posse* and the like. There is more behind, could we but wait to get at it."

"The gallows may loosen his tongue. And how of the girl that was taken too?"

"I have her [in safe keeping. This very evening I shall visit her, and make another trial to get some speech. Which puts me in mind——"

The Colonel tinkled a small hand-bell that lay on the table.

The pause that followed was broken by the Earl.

"May I see the letter?"

The Colonel handed it, and tinkled the bell again, more impatiently. At length steps were heard in the hall, and a servant open'd the door.

"Where is Giles?" ask'd the Colonel. "Why are you taking his place?"

"Giles can't be found, your honour."

"Hey?"

"He's a queer oldster, your honour, an' may be gone to bed wi' his aches and pains."

(I knew pretty well that Giles had done no such thing: but be sure I kept the knowledge safe behind my screen.)

"Then go seek him, and say—No, stop: I can't wait. Order the coach around at the barbican in twenty minutes from now—twenty minutes, mind, without fail. And say—'twill save time—the fellow's to drive me to Mistress Finch's house in St. Thomas' Street—sharp!"

As the man departed on his errand, the Earl laid down His Majesty's letter.

"Hang the fellow," he said, "if they want it: the blame, if any, will be theirs. But, in the name of Heaven, Colonel, don't fail in lending me this thousand men! 'Twill finish the war out of hand."

"I'll do it," answered the Colonel slowly.

"And I'll remember it," said the Earl. "Tomorrow, at six o'clock, I set out."

The two men shook hands on their bargain and left the room, shutting the door after them.

I crept forth from behind the screen, my heart thumping on my ribs. Thus far it had been all fear and trembling with me; but now this was chang'd to a kind of panting joy. 'Twas not that I had spied the prison keys hanging near the fire-place, nor that behind the screen lay a heap of the Colonel's riding-boots, whereof a pair, ready spurr'd, fitted me choicely well; but that my ears tingled with news that turn'd my

escape to a matter of public welfare: and also that the way to escape lay plann'd in my head.

Shod in the Colonel's boots, I advanc'd again to the table. With sealing-wax and the Governor's seal, that lay handy, I clos'd up the King's letter, and sticking it in my breast, caught down the bunch of keys and made for the door.

The hall was void. I snatch'd down a cloak and heavy broad-brimm'd hat from one of the pegs, and donning them, slipp'd back the bolts of the heavy door. It opened without noise. Then, with a last hitch of the cloak, to bring it well about me, I stepp'd forth into the night, shutting the door quietly on my heels.

My feet were on the pavement of the inner ward. Above, one star only broke the blackness of the night. Across the court was a sentry tramping. As I walk'd boldly up, he stopp'd short by the gate between the wards and regarded me.

Now was my danger. I knew not the right key for the wicket: and if I fumbled, the fellow would detect me for certain. I chose one and drew nearer; the fellow look'd, saluted, stepp'd to the wicket, and open'd it himself.

“ Good-night, Colonel! ”

I did not trust myself to answer: but passed

rapidly through to the outer ward. Here, to my joy, in the arch'd passage of the barbican gate, was the carriage waiting, the porter standing beside the door; and here also, to my dismay, was a torch alight, and under it half-a-dozen soldiers chatting. A whisper pass'd on my approach—"The Colonel!" and they hurried into the guard-room.

"Good evening, Colonel!" The porter bow'd low, holding the door wide.

I pass'd him rapidly, climb'd into the shadow of the coach, and drew a long breath.

Then ensued a hateful pause, as the great gates were unbarr'd. I gripp'd my knees for impatience.

The driver spoke a word to the porter, who came round to the coach door again.

"To Mistress Finch's, is it not?"

"Ay," I muttered; "and quickly."

The coachman touched up his pair. The wheels mov'd; went quicker. We were outside the Castle.

With what relief I leant back as the Castle gates clos'd behind us! And with what impatience at our slow pace I sat upright again next minute! The wheels rumbled over the bridge, and immediately we were rolling easily down-hill, through a street of some importance: but by this time the shutters were

up along the shop-fronts and very few people abroad. At the bottom we turn'd sharp to the left along a broader thoroughfare : and then suddenly drew up.

"Are we come?" I wonder'd. But no: 'twas the city gate, and here we had to wait for three minutes at least, till the sentries recognis'd the Colonel's coach and open'd the doors to us. They stood on this side and that, presenting arms, as we rattled through; and next moment I was crossing a broad bridge, with the dark Avon on either side of me, and the vessels thick thereon, their lanterns casting long lines of yellow on the jetty water, their masts and cordage looming up against the dull glare of the city.

Soon we were between lines of building once more, shops, private dwellings and warehouses intermixt; then pass'd a tall church; and in about two minutes more drew up again. I look'd out.

Facing me was a narrow gateway leading to a house that stood somewhat back from the street, as if slipping away from between the lines of shops that wedg'd it in on either hand. Over the grill a link was burning. I stepp'd from the coach, open'd the gate, and crossing the small court, rang at the house bell.

At first there was no answer. I rang again: and now had the satisfaction to hear a light footfall coming.

"To the left now—for the river."

We struck into a narrow side-street; and with that heard a watchman bawl—

"Past nine o' the night, an' a——!"

The shock of our collision sent him to finish his say in the gutter.

"Thieves!" he yell'd.

But already we were twenty yards away, and now in a broader street, whereof one side was wholly lin'd with warehouses. And here, to our dismay, we heard shouts behind, and the noise of feet running.

About half-way down the street I spied a gateway standing ajar, and pull'd Delia aside, into a courtyard litter'd with barrels and timbers, and across it to a black empty barn of a place, where a flight of wooden steps glimmer'd, that led to an upper storey. We climb'd these stairs at a run.

"Faugh! What a vile smell!"

The loft was pil'd high with great bales of wool, as I found by the touch, and their odour enough to satisfy an army. Nevertheless, I was groping about for a place to hide, when Delia touch'd me by the arm, and pointed.

Looking, I descried in the gloom a tall quadrilateral of purple, not five steps away, with a speck of light

shining near the top of it, and three dark streaks running down the middle, whereof one was much thicker than the rest. 'Twas an open doorway; the speck, a star fram'd within it; the broad streak, a ship's mast reaching up; and the lesser ones two ends of a rope, working over a pulley above my head, and used for lowering the bales of wool on ship-board.

Advancing, I stood on the sill and look'd down. On the black water, twenty feet below, lay a three-masted trader, close against the warehouse. My toes stuck out over her deck, almost.

At first glance I could see no sign of life on board: but presently was aware of a dark figure leaning over the bulwarks, near the bows. He was quite motionless. His back was towards us, blotted against the black shadow; and the man engag'd only, it seem'd, in watching the bright splash of light flung by the ship's lantern on the water beneath him.

I resolv'd to throw myself on the mercy of this silent figure; and put out a hand to test the rope. One end of it was fix'd to a bale of wool that lay, as it had been lower'd, on the deck. Flinging myself on the other, I found it sink gently from the pulley, as the weight below moved slowly upwards: and sinking with it, I held on till my feet touch'd the deck.

Still the figure in the bows was motionless.

I paid out my end of the rope softly, lowering back the bale of wool : and, as soon as it rested again on deck, signall'd to Delia to let herself down.

She did so. As she alighted, and stood beside me, our hands bungled. The rope slipp'd up quickly, letting down the bale with a run.

We caught at the rope, and stopp'd it just in time : but the pulley above creak'd vociferously. I turn'd my head.

The man in the bows had not mov'd.

CHAPTER X.

CAPTAIN POTTERY AND CAPTAIN SETTLE.

"Now either I am mad or dreaming," thought I: for that the fellow had not heard our noise was to me starkly incredible. I stepp'd along the deck towards him: not an inch did he budge. I touch'd him on the shoulder.

He fac'd round with a quick start.

"Sir," said I, quick and low, before he could get a word out—"Sir, we are in your hands. I will be plain. To-night I have broke out of Bristol Keep, and the Colonel's men are after me. Give me up to them, and they hang me to-morrow: give my comrade up, and they persecute her vilely. Now, sir, I know not which side you be, but there's our case in a nutshell."

The man bent forward, displaying a huge, rounded face, very kindly about the eyes, and set atop of the oddest body in the world: for under a trunk extraordinary broad and strong, straddled a pair of legs that a baby would have disown'd—so thin and stunted were they, and (to make it the queerer) ended in feet the most prodigious you ever saw.

As I said, this man leant forward, and shouted into my ear so that I fairly leapt in the air—

“My name’s Pottery—Bill Pottery, cap’n o’ the *Godsend*—an’ you can’t make me hear, not if you bust yoursel’!”

You may think this put me in a fine quandary.

“I be deaf as nails!” bawl’d he.

’Twas horrible: for the troopers (I thought) if anywhere near, could not miss hearing him. His voice shook the very rigging.

“. . . An’ o’ my crew the half ashore gettin’ drunk, an’ the half below in a very accomplish’d state o’ liquor: so there’s no chance for ’ee to speak!”

He paus’d a moment, then roared again—

“What a pity! ’Cos you make me very curious—that you do!”

Luckily, at this moment, Delia had the sense to put a finger to her lip. The man wheel’d round without another word, led us aft over the blocks, cordage, and all manner of loose gear that encumber’d the deck, to a ladder that, towards the stern, led down into darkness. Here he sign’d to us to follow; and, descending first, threw open a door, letting out a faint stream of light in our faces. ’Twas the captain’s cabin, lin’d with cupboards and lockers: and the light came from an oil

lamp hanging over a narrow deal table. By this light Captain Billy scrutinis'd us for an instant: then, from one of his lockers, brought out pen, paper, and ink, and set them on the table before me.

I caught up the pen, dipp'd it, and began to write—

“I am John Marvel, a servant of King Charles; and this night am escap'd out of Bristol Castle. If you be——”

Thus far I had written without glancing up, in fear to read the disappointment of my hopes. But now the pen was caught suddenly from my fingers, the paper torn in shreds, and there was Master Pottery shaking us both by the hand, nodding and becking, and smiling the while all over his big red face.

But he ceas'd at last: and opening another of his lockers, drew forth a horn lantern, a mallet, and a chisel. Not a word was spoken as he lit the lantern and pass'd out of the cabin, Delia and I following at his heels.

Just outside, at the foot of the steps, he stoop'd, pull'd up a trap in the flooring, and disclos'd another ladder stretching, as it seem'd, down into the bowels of the ship. This we descended carefully; and found ourselves in the hold, pinching our noses 'twixt finger and thumb.

For indeed the smell here was searching to a

very painful degree : for the room was narrow, and every inch of it contested by two puissant essences, the one of raw wool, the other of bilge-water. With wool the place was pil'd : but also I notic'd, not far from the ladder, several casks set on their ends ; and to these the Captain led us.

They were about a dozen in all, stack'd close together : and Master Pottery, rolling two apart from the rest, dragg'd them to another trap and tugg'd out the bungs. A stream of fresh water gush'd from each and splash'd down the trap into the bilge below. Then, having drain'd them, he stav'd in their heads with a few blows of his mallet.

His plan for us was clear. And in a very few minutes Delia and I were crouching on the timbers, each with a cask inverted over us, our noses at the bung-holes and our ears listening to Master Pottery's footsteps as they climb'd heavily back to deck. The rest of the casks were stack'd close round us, so that even had the gloom allow'd, we could see nothing at all.

" Jack ! "

" Delia ! "

" Dost feel heroical at all ? "

" Not one whit. There's a trickle of water running down my back, to begin with."

"And my nose it itches; and oh, what a hateful smell! Say something to me, Jack."

"My dear," said I, "there is one thing I've been longing these weeks to say: but this seems an odd place for it."

"What is't?"

I purs'd up my lips to the bung-hole, and—

"I love you," said I.

There was silence for a moment: and then, within Delia's cask, the sound of muffled laughter.

"Delia," I urg'd, "I mean it, upon my oath. Wilt marry me, sweetheart?"

"Must get out of this cask first. Oh, Jack, what a dear goose thou art!" And the laughter began again.

I was going to answer, when I heard a loud shouting overhead. 'Twas the sound of someone hailing the ship, and thought I, "the troopers are on us!"

They were, in truth. Soon I heard the noise of feet above and a string of voices speaking one after another, louder and louder. And next Master Pottery began to answer up and drown'd all speech but his own. When he ceas'd, there was silence for some minutes: after which we heard a party descend to the cabin, and the trampling of their feet on the boards above us. They remain'd there some while discussing: and then came footsteps

down the second ladder, and a twinkle of light reach'd me through the bung-hole of my cask.

"Quick!" said a husky voice; "overhaul the cargo here!"

I heard some half-dozen troopers bustling about the hold and tugging out the bales of wool.

"Hi!" call'd Master Pottery: "an' when you've done rummaging my ship, put everything back as you found it."

"Poke about with your swords," commanded the husky voice. "What's in those barrels yonder?"

"Water, sergeant," answers a trooper, rolling out a couple.

"Nothing behind them?"

"No; they're right against the side."

"Drop 'em then. Plague on this business! 'Tis my notion they're a mile away, and Cap'n Stubbs no better than a fool to send us back here. He's grudging promotion, that's what he is! Hurry, there—hurry!"

* * * * *

Ten minutes later, the searchers were gone; and we in our casks drawing long breaths of thankfulness and strong odours. And so we crouch'd till, about midnight, Captain Billy brought us down a supper of ship's biscuit: which we crept forth to eat, being sorely cramp'd.

He could not hear our thanks : but guess'd them.

"Now say not a word! To-morrow we sail for Plymouth Sound: thence for Brittany. Hist! We be all King's men aboard the *Godsend*, tho' hearing nought I says little. Yet I have my reasoning heresies, holding the Lord's Anointed to be an anointed rogue, but nevertheless to be serv'd: just as aboard the *Godsend* I be Capt'n Billy an' you plain Jack, be your virtues what they may. An' the conclusion is—damn all mutineers an' rebels! Tho', to be sure, the words be a bit lusty for a young gentlewoman's ears."

We went back to our casks with lighter hearts. Howbeit 'twas near five in the morning, I dare say, before my narrow bedchamber allow'd me to drop asleep.

I woke to spy through my bunghole the faint light of day struggling down the hatches. Above, I heard a clanking noise, and the voices of the men hiccoughing a dismal chant. They were lifting anchor. I crawl'd forth and woke Delia, who was yet sleeping: and together we ate the breakfast that lay ready set for us on the head of a barrel.

Presently the sailors broke off their song, and we heard their feet shuffling to and fro on deck.

"Sure," cried Delia, "we are moving!"

And surely we were, as could be told by the alter'd sound of the water beneath us, and the many creakings that the *Godsend* began to keep. Once more I tasted freedom again, and the joy of living, and could have sung for the mirth that lifted my heart. "Let us but gain open sea," said I, "and I'll have tit-for-tat with these rebels!"

But alas! before we had left Avon mouth twenty minutes, 'twas another tale. For I lay on my side in that dark hold and long'd to die: and Delia sat up beside me, her hands in her lap, and her great eyes fixt most dolefully. And when Captain Billy came down with news that we were safe and free to go on deck, we turn'd our faces from him, and said we thank'd him kindly, but had no longer any wish that way—too wretched, even, to remember his deafness.

Let me avoid, then, some miserable hours, and come to the evening, when, faint with fasting and nausea, we struggled up to the deck for air, and look'd about us.

'Twas grey—grey everywhere: the sky lead-colour'd, with deeper shades towards the east, where a bank of cloud blotted the coast-line: the thick rain descending straight, with hardly wind enough to set the sails flapping; the sea spread like a plate of lead, save

only where, to leeward, a streak of curded white crawled away from under the *Godsend's* keel.

On deck, a few sailors mov'd about, red-eyed and heavy. They show'd no surprise to see us, but nodded very friendly, with a smile for our strange complexions. Here again, as ever, did adversity mock her own image.

But what more took our attention was to see a row of men stretch'd on the starboard side, like corpses, their heads in the scuppers, their legs pointed in-board, and very orderly arrang'd. They were a dozen and two in all, and over them bent Captain Billy with a mop in his hand, and a bucket by his side : who beckon'd that we should approach.

"Array'd in order o' merit," said he, pointing with his mop like a showman to the line of figures before him.

We drew near.

"This here is Matt. Soames, master o' this vessel—
an' he's dead."

"Dead?"

"Dead-drunk, that is. O the gifted man! Come up!" He thrust the mop in the fellow's heavy face. "There now! Did he move, did he wink? 'No,' says you. O an accomplished drunkard!"

He paus'd a moment; then stirr'd up No. 2, who open'd one eye lazily, and shut it again in slumber.

“You saw? Open’d one eye, hey? That’s Benjamin Halliday. The next is a black man, as you see : a man of dismal colour, and hath other drawbacks natural to such. Can the Æthiop shift his skin? No, but he’ll open both eyes. See there—a perfect Christian, in so far as drink can make him.”

With like comments he ran down the line till he came to the last man, in front of whom he stepp’d back.

“About this last—he’s a puzzler. Times I put him top o’ the list, an’ times at the tail. That’s Ned Masters, an’ was once the Reverend Edward Masters, Bachelor o’ Divinity in Cambridge College; but in a tavern there fell a-talking with a certain Pelagian about Adam an’ Eve, an’ because the fellow turn’d stubborn, put a knife into his waistband, an’ had to run away to sea : a middling drinker only, but after a quart or so to hear him tackle Predestination! So there be times after all when I sets’n apart, and says, ‘Drunk, you’m no good, but half-drunk, you’m priceless.’ Now there’s a man——” He dropp’d his mop, and, leading us aft, pointed with admiring finger to the

I broke off, for she had come to a stop, wringing her hands and looking in my face most dolefully.

“ Oh, dear—oh, dear ! Jack, we have had such merry times : and you are spoiling all the fun ! ”

We follow'd the road after this very moodily ; for Delia, whom I had made sharer of the rebels' secret, agreed that no time was to be lost in reaching Bodmin, that lay a good thirty miles to the south-west. Night fell and the young moon rose, with a brisk breeze at our backs that kept us still walking without any feeling of weariness. Captain Billy had given me at parting a small compass, of new invention, that a man could carry easily in his pocket ; and this from time to time I examin'd in the moonlight, guiding our way almost due south, in hopes of striking into the main road westward. I doubt not we lost a deal of time among the by-ways ; but at length happen'd on a good road bearing south, and follow'd it till daybreak, when to our satisfaction we spied a hill in front, topp'd with a stout castle, and under it a town of importance, that we guess'd to be Launceston.

By this, my comrade and I were on the best of terms again ; and now drew up to consider if we should enter the town or avoid it to the west, trusting to find a

breakfast in some tavern on the way. Because we knew not with certainty the temper of the country, it seem'd best to choose this second course : so we fetch'd around by certain barren meadows, and thought ourselves lucky to hit on a road that, by the size, must be the one we sought, and a tavern with a wide yard before it and a carter's van standing at the entrance, not three gunshots from the town walls.

"Now Providence hath surely led us to breakfast," said Delia, and stepp'd before me into the yard, towards the door.

I was following her when, inside of a gate to the right of the house, I caught the gleam of steel, and turn'd aside to look.

To my dismay there stood near a score of chargers in this second court, saddled and dripping with sweat. My first thought was to run after Delia ; but a quick surprise made me rub my eyes with wonder—

'Twas the sight of a sorrel mare among them—a mare with one high white stocking. In a thousand I could have told her for Molly.

Three seconds after I was at the tavern door, and in my ears a voice sounding that stopp'd me short and told me in one instant that without God's help all was lost.

'Twas the voice of Captain Settle speaking in the

tap-room; and already Delia stood, past concealment, by the open door.

“ . . . And therefore, master carter, it grieves me to disappoint thee; but no man goeth this day toward Bodmin. Such be my Lord of Stamford’s orders, whose servant I am, and as captain of this troop I am sent to exact them. As they displease you, his lordship is but twenty-four hours behind: you can abide him and complain. Doubtless he will hear—*ten million devils!*”

I heard his shout as he caught sight of Delia. I saw his crimson face as he darted out and gripp’d her. I saw, or half saw, the troopers crowding out after him. For a moment I hesitated. Then came my pretty comrade’s voice, shrill above the hubbub—

“ Jack—they have horses outside! Leave me—I am ta’en—and ride, dear lad—ride!”

In a flash my decision was taken, for better or worse. I dash’d out around the house, vaulted the gate, and catching at Molly’s mane, leapt into the saddle.

A dozen troopers were at the gate, and two had their pistols levell’d.

“ Surrender!”

“ Be hang’d if I do!”

I set my teeth and put Molly at the low wall. As

she rose like a bird in air the two pistols rang out together, and a burning pain seem'd to tear open my left shoulder. In a moment the mare alighted safe on the other side, flinging me forward on her neck. But I scrambled back, and with a shout that frighten'd my own ears, dug my heels into her flanks.

Half a minute more and I was on the hard road, galloping westward for dear life. So also were a score of rebel troopers. Twenty miles and more lay before me ; and a bare hundred yards was all my start.

CHAPTER XI.

I RIDE DOWN INTO TEMPLE: AND AM WELL-TREATED
THERE.

AND now I did indeed abandon myself to despair. Few would have given a groat for my life, with that crew at my heels; and I least of all, now that my dear comrade was lost. The wound in my shoulder was bleeding sore—I could feel the warm stream welling—yet not so sore as my heart. And I pressed my knees into the saddle-flap, and wondered what the end would be.

The sorrel mare was galloping, free and strong, her delicate ears laid back, and the network of veins under her soft skin working with the heave and fall of her withers: yet—by the mud and sweat about her—I knew she must have travell'd far before I mounted. I heard a shot or two fired, far up the road: tho' their bullets must have fallen short: at least, I heard none whiz past. But the rebels' shouting was clear enough, and the thud of their gallop behind.

I think that, for a mile or two, I must have ridden in a sort of swoon. 'Tis certain, not an inch of the road comes back to me: nor did I once turn my head to

"Joan!" the voice began, "Joan—Jan Tergagle's a-clawin' my legs—Gar-rout, thou hell-cat—Blast thee, let me zog! Pull'n off Joan—Jo-an!"

The voice died away into a wail; then broke out in a racket of curses. Joan stepped to the door and flung it wide. As my eyes grew used to the gloom inside, they saw this:—

A rude kitchen—the furniture but two rickety chairs, now toss'd on their faces, an oak table, with legs sunk into the earth, a keg of strong waters, tilted over and draining upon the mud floor, a ladder leading up to a loft, and in two of the corners a few bundles of bracken strewn for bedding. To the left, as one entered, was an open hearth; but the glowing peat-turves were now pitch'd to right and left over the hearth-stone and about the floor, where they rested, filling the den with smoke. Under one of the chairs a black cat spat and bristled: while in the middle of the room, bare-footed in the embers, crouched a man. He was half-naked, old and bent, with matted grey hair and beard hanging almost to his waist. His chest and legs were bleeding from a score of scratches; and he pointed at the cat, opening and shutting his mouth like a dog, and barking out curse upon curse.

No way upset, Joan stepped across the kitchen, laid me on one of the bracken beds, and explain'd—

“That's feyther: he's drunk.”

With which she turn'd, dealt the old man a cuff that stretch'd him senseless, and gathering up the turves, piled them afresh on the hearth. This done, she took the keg and gave me a drink of it. The stuff scalded me, but I thanked her. And then, when she had shifted my bed a bit, to ease the pain of lying, she righted a chair, drew it up and sat beside me. The old man lay like a log where he had fallen, and was now snoring. Presently, the fumes of the liquor, or mere faintness, mastered me, and my eyes closed. But the picture they closed upon was that of Joan, as she leant forward, chin on hand, with the glow of the fire on her brown skin and in the depths of her dark eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW JOAN SAVED THE ARMY OF THE WEST; AND SAW
THE FIGHT ON BRADDOCK DOWN.

BUT the pain of my hurt followed into my dreams. I woke with a start, and tried to sit up.

Within the kitchen all was quiet. The old savage was still stretch'd on the floor: the cat curled upon the hearth. The girl had not stirr'd: but looking towards the window-hole, I saw night outside, and a frosty star sparkling far down in the west.

"Joan, what's the hour?"

"Sun's been down these four hours." She turned her face to look at me.

"I've no business lying here."

"Chose to come, lad: none axed thee, that *I* knows by."

"Where's the mare? Must set me across her back, Joan, and let me ride on."

"Mare's in stable, wi' fetlocks swelled like puddens. Chose to come, lad; an' choose or no, must bide."

"'Tis for the General Hopton, at Bodmin, I am bound, Joan; and wound or no, must win there this night."

"And that's seven mile away: wi' a bullet in thy skull, and a peat-quag thy burial. For *they* went south, and thy road lieth more south than west."

"The troopers?"

"Aye, Jack: an' work I had this day wi' those same bloody warriors: but take a sup at the keg, and bite this manchet of oat-cake while I tell thee."

And so, having fed me, and set my bed straight, she sat on the floor beside me (for the better hearing), and in her uncouth tongue, told how I had been saved. I cannot write her language; but the tale, in sum, was this:—

When I dropt forward into her arms, Joan for a moment was taken aback, thinking me dead. But (to quote her) "'no good,' said I, 'in cuddlin' a lad 'pon the hill-side, for folks to see, tho' he *have* a-got curls like a wench: an' dead or 'live, no use to wait for others to make sure.'"

So she lifted and carried me to a spot hard by, that she called the "Jew's Kitchen;" and where that was, even with such bearings as I had, she defied me to discover. There was no time to tend me, whilst Molly stood near to show my whereabouts: so she let me lie, and went to lead the sorrel down to stable.

Her hand was on the bridle when she heard a *Whoop!*

up the road ; and there were half-a-dozen riders on the crest, and tearing down-hill towards her. Joan had nothing left but to feign coolness, and went on leading the mare down the slope.

In a while, up comes the foremost trooper, draws rein, and pants out "Where's he *to* ?"

"Who ?" asks Joan, making out to be surprised.

"Why, the lad whose mare thou'rt leadin' ?"

"Mile an' half away by now."

"How's that ?"

"Freshly horsed," explains Joan.

The troopers—they were all around her by this—swore 'twas a lie ; but luckily, being down in the hollow, could not see over the next ridge. They began a string of questions all together : but at last a little tun-bellied sergeant call'd "Silence !" and asked the girl, "did she loan the fellow a horse ?"

Here I will quote her again :—

" ' Sir, to thee,' I answer'd, ' no loan at all, but fair swap for our Grey Robin.'

" ' That's a lie,' he says ; ' an' I won't believe thee.'

" ' Might so well,' says I ; ' but go to stable, an' see for thyself.' (Never had grey horse to my name, Jack ; but, thinks I, that's *his'n* lookout.)"

They went, did these simple troopers, to look at the stable, and sure enough, there was no Grey Robin. Nevertheless, some amongst them had logic enough to take this as something less than proof convincing, and spent three hours and more ransacking the house and barn, and searching the tor and the moors below it. I learnt too, that Joan had come in for some rough talk—to which she put a stop, as she told me, by offering to fight any man Jack of them for the buttons on his buff coat. And at length, about sundown, they gave up the hunt, and rode away over the moors towards Warleggan, having (as the girl heard them say) to be at Braddock before night.

“Where is this Braddock?”

“Nigh to Lord Mohun’s house at Boconnoc : seven mile away to the south, and seven mile or so from Bodmin, as a crow flies.”

“Then go I must,” cried I : and hereupon I broke out with all the trouble that was on my mind, and the instant need to save these gallant gentlemen of Cornwall, ere two armies should combine against them. I told of the King’s letter in my breast, and how I found the Lord Stamford’s men at Launceston ; how that Ruthen, with the vanguard of the rebels, was now at Liskeard, with but a bare day’s march between the two, and none

but I to carry the warning. And "Oh, Joan!" I cried, "my comrade I left upon the road. Brighter courage and truer heart never man proved, and yet left by me in the rebels' hands. Alas! that I could neither save nor help, but must still ride on: and here is the issue—to lie struck down within ten mile of my goal—I, that have travelled two hundred. And if the Cornishmen be not warned to give fight before Lord Stamford come up, all's lost. Even now they be out-number'd. So lift me, Joan, and set me astride Molly, and I'll win to Bodmin yet."

"Reckon, Jack, thou'd best hand *me* thy letter."

Now, I did not at once catch the intent of these words, so simply spoken; but stared at her like an owl.

"There's horse in stall, lad," she went on, "tho' no Grey Robin. Tearaway's the name, and strawberry the colour."

"But, Joan, Joan, if you do this—feel inside my coat here, to the left—you will save an army, girl, may-be a throne! Here 'tis, Joan, see—no, not that—here! Say the seal is that of the Governor of Bristol, who stole it from me for a while: but the handwriting will be known for the King's: and no hand but yours must touch it till you stand before Sir Ralph Hopton. The

King shall thank you, Joan; and God will bless you for't."

"Hope so, I'm sure. But larn me what to say, lad: for I be main thick-witted."

So I told her the message over and over, till she had it by heart.

"Shan't forgit, now," she said, at length; "an' so hearken to me for a change. Bide still, nor fret thyself. Here's pasty an' oat-cake, an' a keg o' water that I'll stow beside thee. Pay no heed to feyther, an' if he wills to get drunk an' fight wi' Jan Tergagle—that's the cat—why, let'n. Drunk or sober, he's no 'count."

She hid the letter in her bosom, and stepp'd to the door. On the threshold she turned—

"Jack—forgot to ax: what be all this bloodshed about?"

"For Church and King, Joan."

"H'm: same knowledge ha' I o' both—an' that's naught. But I dearly loves fair play."

She was gone. In a minute or so I heard the trampling of a horse: and then, with a scurry of hoofs, Joan was off on the King's errand, and riding into the darkness.

Little rest had I that night; but lay awake on my bracken bed and watched the burning peat-turves turn

that were galloping three stout horses in a carriage, and upon it a brass twelve-pounder. But the carriage stuck fast in a quag, and so they cut the traces and left it there, where, two days after, Sir John Berkeley's dragoons found and pulled it out. And this was the fourth, I have heard, that the King's troops took in that victory.

Yet there were not above five or six hundred in all that I saw; and I guessed (as was the case) that this must be but an off-shoot, so to say, of the bigger rout that pass'd eastward through Liskeard. I was thinking of this when I heard footsteps near, and a man came panting through a gap in the wall, into the yard.

He was a big, bare-headed fellow, exceedingly flusht with running, but unhurt, as far as I could see. Indeed, he might easily have kill'd me, and for a moment I thought sure he would. But catching sight of me, he nodded very friendly, and sitting on a heap of stones a yard or two away, began to draw off his boot, and search for a prickle, that it seem'd had got into it.

"'Tis a mess of it, yonder," said he, quietly, and jerk'd his thumb over his shoulder.

By the look of me, he could tell I was on the other side; but this did not appear to concern him.

"How has it gone?" asked I.

"Well," says he, with his nose in the boot; "we

had a pretty rising ground, and the Cornishmen march'd up and whipt us out—that's all—and took a mort o' prisoners." He found the prickle, drew on his boot again, and asked—

"T'other side?"

I nodded.

"That's the laughing side, this day. Good evening."

And with that he went off as fast as he came.

'Twas, maybe, an hour after, that another came in through the same gap: this time a lean, hawk-eyed man, with a pincht face and two ugly gashes—one across the brow from left eye to the roots of his hair, the other in his leg below the knee, that had sliced through boot and flesh like a scythe-cut. His face was smear'd with blood, and he carried a musket.

"Water!" he bark'd out as he came trailing into the yard. "Give me water—I'm a dead man!"

He was stepping over me to enter the kitchen, when he halted and said—

"Art a malignant, for certain!"

And before I had a chance to reply, his musket was swung up, and I felt my time was come to die.

But now the old savage, that had been sitting all day before his fire, without so much as a sign to show if he noticed aught that was passing, jump'd up with a

so: and dropping them the next instant had caught the Cheap-Jack's beard, as you might a bell-rope, and wrench'd him head-foremost off his stand, my thirteen-pence flying far and wide. Plump he fell into the crowd, that scatter'd on all hands as Joan pummelled him: and *whack, whack!* fell the blows on the poor idiot's face, who scream'd for mercy, as though Judgment Day were come.

No one, for the minute, dared to step between them: and presently Joan looking up, with arm raised for another buffet, spied a poor Astrologer close by, in a red and yellow gown, that had been reading fortunes in a tub of black water beside him, but was now broken off, dismayed at the hubbub. To this tub she dragged the Cheap-Jack and sent him into it with a round souse. The black water splashed right and left over the crowd. Then, her wrath sated, Joan faced the rest, with hands on hips, and waited for them to come on.

Not a word had she spoken, from first to last: but stood now with hot cheeks and bosom heaving. Then, finding none to take up her challenge, she strode out through the folk, and I after her, with the mirror in my hand; while the Cheap-Jack picked himself out of the tub, whining, and the Astrologer wip'd his long white beard and soil'd robe.

Outside the throng was a carriage, stopp'd for a minute by this tumult, and a servant at the horses' heads. By the look of it, 'twas the coach of some person of quality; and glancing at it I saw inside an old gentleman with a grave venerable face, seated. For the moment it flash'd on me I had seen him before, somewhere: and cudgell'd my wits to think where it had been. But a second and longer gaze assured me I was mistaken, and I went on down the street after Joan.

She was walking fast and angry; nor when I caught her up and tried to soothe, would she answer me but in the shortest words. Woman's justice, as I had just learnt, has this small defect—it goes straight enough, but mainly for the wrong object. Which now I proved in my own case.

“Where are you going, Joan?”

“To ‘Fifteen Balls’ stable, for my horse.”

“Art not leaving the fair yet, surely!”

“That I be, tho’. Have had fairing enow—wi’ a man!”

Nor for a great part of the way home would she speak to me. But meeting, by Pound Scavens (a hamlet close to the road), with some friends going to the fair, she stopp'd for a while to chat with them,

whilst I rode forward : and when she overtook me, her brow was clear again.

"Am a hot-headed fool, Jack, and have spoilt thy day for thee."

"Nay, that you have not," said I, heartily glad to see her humble, for the first time in our acquaintance : "but if you have forgiven me that which I could not help, you shall take this that I bought for you, in proof."

And pulling out the mirror, I leant over and handed it to her.

"What i' the world be this?" she ask'd, taking and looking at it doubtfully.

"Why, a mirror."

"What's that?"

"A glass to see your face in," I explained.

"Be this my face?" She rode forward, holding up the glass in front of her. "Why, what a handsome-looking gal I be, to be sure! Jack, art certain 'tis my very own face?"

"To be sure," said I amazed.

"Well!" There was silence for a full minute, save for our horses' tread on the high-road. And then—

"Jack, I be powerful dirty!"

This was true enough, and it made me laugh. She

looked up solemnly at my mirth (having no sense of a joke, then or ever) and bent forward to the glass again.

"By the way," said I, "did you mark a carriage just outside the crowd, by the Cheap-Jack's booth?—with a white-hair'd gentleman seated inside?"

Joan nodded. "Master Hannibal Tingcomb: steward o' Gleys."

"What!"

I jumped in my saddle, and with a pull at the bridle brought Molly to a stand-still.

"Of Gleys?" I cried. "Steward of Sir Deakin Killigrew that was?"

"Right, lad, except the last word. 'That is,' should'st rather say."

"Then you are wrong, Joan: for he's dead and buried, these five months. Where is this house of Gleys? for to-morrow I must ride there."

"'Tis easy found, then: for it stands on the south coast yonder, and no house near it: five mile from anywhere, and sixteen from Temple, due south. Shall want thee afore thou startest, Jack. Dear, now! who'd ha' thought I was so dirty?"

The cottage door stood open as we rode into the yard, and from it a faint smoke came curling, with a

"Hast a proud stomach that cometh of faring sumptuously : the beef therein is our own killing," said he. "Young sir, art a man of blood, I greatly fear, by thy long sword and handiness with the fire-arms."

"Shall be presently," answered I, "if you lead me not to Master Tingcomb."

He scrambled up briskly and totter'd out of the kitchen into a stone corridor, I after him. Along this he hurried, muttering all the way, and halted before a door at the end. Without knocking he pushed it open, and motioning me to enter, hasten'd back as he had come.

"Come in," said a voice that seem'd familiar to me.

Though, as you know, 'twas still high day, in the room where now I found myself was every appearance of night: the shutters being closed, and six lighted candles standing on the table. Behind them sat the venerable gentleman whom I had seen in the coach, now wearing a plain suit of black, and reading in a great book that lay open on the table. I guess'd it to be the Bible; but noted that the candles had shades about them, so disposed as to throw the light, not on the page, but on the doorway where I stood.

Yet the old gentleman, having bid me enter, went

on reading for a while as though wholly unaware of me : which I found somewhat nettling, so began—

“I speak, I believe, to Master Hannibal Tingcomb, steward to Sir Deakin Killigrew.”

He went on, as if ending his sentence aloud :

“ . . . And my darling from the power of the dog.” Here he paused with finger on the place and looked up. “Yes, young sir, that is my name—steward to the late Sir Deakin Killigrew.”

“The late?” cried I: “Then you know——”

“Surely I know that Sir Deakin is dead: else should I be but an unworthy steward.” He open’d his grave eyes as if in wonder.

“And his son, also?”

“Also his son Anthony, a headstrong boy, I fear me, a consorter with vile characters. Alas! that I should say it.”

“And his daughter, Mistress Delia?”

“Alas!” and he fetched a deep sigh.

“Do you mean, sir, that she too is dead!”

“Why, to be sure—but let us talk on less painful matters.”

“In one moment, sir: but first tell me—where did she die, and when?”

For my heart stood still, and I was fain to clutch

the table between us to keep me from falling. I think this did not escape him, for he gave me a sharp look, and then spoke very quiet and hush't.

"She was cruelly kill'd by highwaymen, at the 'Three Cups' inn, some miles out of Hungerford. The date given me is the 3rd of December last."

With this a great rush of joy came over me, and I blurted out, delighted—

"There, sir, you are wrong! Her father was kill'd on the night of which you speak—cruelly enough, as you say: but Mistress Delia Killigrew escaped, and after the most incredible adventures——"

I was expecting him to start up with joy at my announcement; but instead of this, he gaz'd at me very sorrowfully and shook his head; which brought me to a stand.

"Sir," I said, changing my tone, "I speak but what I know: for 'twas I had the happy fortune to help her to escape, and, under God's hand, to bring her safe to Cornwall."

"Then, where is she now?"

Now this was just what I could not tell. So, standing before him, I gave him my name and a history of all my adventures in my dear comrade's company, from the hour when I saw her first in the inn at Hungerford.

Still keeping his finger on the page, he heard me to the end attentively, but with a curling of the lips toward the close, such as I did not like. And when I had done, to my amaze he spoke out sharply, and as if to a whipt schoolboy.

“’Tis a cock-and-bull story, sir, of which I could hope to make you ashamed. Six weeks in your company? and in boy’s habit? Surely ’twas enough the pure unhappy maid should be dead—without such vile slander on her fame, and from you, that were known, sir, to have been at that inn, and on that night, with her murderers. Boy, I have evidence that, taken with your confession, would weave you a halter; and am a Justice of the Peace. Be thankful, then, that I am a merciful man: yet be abasht.”

Abasht, indeed, I was; or at least taken aback, to see his holy indignation and the flush on his waxen cheek. Like a fool I stood staggered, and wondered dimly where I had heard that thin voice before. In the confusion of my senses I heard it say solemnly—

“The sins of her fathers have overtaken her, as the Book of Exodus proclaim’d: therefore is her inheritance wasted, and given to the satyr and the wild ass.”

“And which of the twain be you, sir?”

I cannot tell what forced this violent radeness from

me, for he seem'd an honest, good man; but my heart was boiling that any should put so ill a construction on my Delia. As for him, he had risen, and was moving with dignity to the door—to show me out, as I guess. When suddenly I, that had been staring stupidly, leapt upon him and hurled him back into his chair.

For I had marked his left foot trailing, and, by the token, knew him for the white-hair'd man of the bowling-green.

“Master Hannibal Tingcomb,” I spoke in his ear, “—dog and murderer! What did you in Oxford last November? And how of Captain Lucius Higgs, otherwise Captain Luke Settle, otherwise Mr. X.? Speak, before I serve you as the dog was served that night!”

I dream yet, in my sick nights, of the change that came over the vile, hypocritical knave at these words of mine. To see his pale venerable face turn green and livid, his eye-ball start, his hands clutch at air—it frighten'd me.

“Brandy!” he gasped. “Brandy! there—quick—for God's sake!”

And the next moment he had slipp'd from my grasp, and was wallowing in a fit on the floor. I ran to the cupboard at which he had pointed, and finding there a bottle of strong waters, forced some drops between his

teeth : and hard work it was, he gnashing at me all the time and foaming at the mouth.

Presently he ceased to writhe and bite : and lifting, I set him in his chair, where he lay, a mere limp bundle, staring and blinking. So I sat down facing him, and waited his recovery.

"Dear young sir," he began at length feebly, his fingers searching the Bible before him, from force of habit. "Kind young sir—I am an old, dying man, and my sins have found me out. Only yesterday, the physician at Bodmin told me that my days are number'd. This is the second attack, and the third will kill me."

"Well?" said I.

"If—if Mistress Delia be alive (as indeed I did not think), I will make restitution—I will confess—only tell me what to do, that I may die in peace."

Indeed, he look'd pitiable, sitting there and stammering : but I harden'd my heart to say—

"I must have a confession, then, written before I leave the room."

"But, dear young friend, you will not use it if I give up all? You will not seek my life? that already is worthless, as you see."

"Why, 'tis what you deserve. But Delia shall say

when I find her—as I shall go straight to seek her. If she be lost, I shall use it—never fear: if she be found, it shall be hers to say what mercy she can discover in her heart; but I promise you I shall advise none.”

The tears by this were coursing down his shrunken cheeks, but I observ’d him watch me narrowly, as though to find out how much I knew. So I pull’d out my pistol, and setting pen and paper before him, obtain’d at the end of an hour a very pretty confession of his sins, which lies among my papers to this day. When ’twas written and sign’d, in a weak, rambling hand, I read it through, folded it, placed it inside my coat, and prepared to take my leave.

But he called out an order to the old servant to saddle my mare, and stood softly praying and beseeching me in the courtyard till the last moment. Nor when I was mounted would anything serve but he must follow at my stirrup to the gate. But when I had briefly taken leave, and the heavy doors had creaked behind me, I heard a voice calling after me down the road—

“Dear young sir! Dear friend!—I had forgotten somewhat.”

Returning, I found the gate fastened, and the iron shutter slipt back.

"Well?" I asked, leaning towards it.

"Dear young friend, I pity thee, for thy paper is worthless. To-day, by my advices, the army of our most Christian Parliament, more than twenty thousand strong, under the Earl of Stamford, have overtaken thy friends, the malignant gentry, near Stratton Heath, in the north-east. They are more than two to one. By this hour to-morrow, the Papists all will be running like conies to their burrows, and little chance wilt thou have to seek Delia Killigrew, much less to find her. And remember, I know enough of thy late services to hang thee: mercy then will lie in my friends' hands; but be sure I shall advise none."

And with a mocking laugh he clapp'd-to the grating in my face.

But to-day as I climb'd past the spot, something very bright flash'd in my eyes and dazzled me: and rubbing them and looking, I saw a great hole in the hill—facing to the sou'-west—in the very place I had search'd for it; and out of this a beam of light glancing.

Creeping near on tip-toe, I found one huge block of granite that before had seemed bedded, among a dozen fellow-boulders, against the turf—the base resting on another well-nigh as big—was now rolled back; having been fixed to work smoothly on a pivot, yet so like nature that no eye, but by chance, could detect it. Now, who in the beginning designed this hiding-place I leave you to consider; and whether it was the Jews or Phœnicians—nations, I am told, that once work'd the hills around for tin. But inside 'twas curiously paved and lined with slabs of granite, the specks of ore in which, I noted, were the points of light that had once puzzled me. And here was Joan's bower, and Joan herself inside it.

She was sitting with her back to me, in her left hand holding up the mirror, that caught the rays of the now sinking sun (and thus had dazzled me), while with her right she tried to twist into some form of knot her tresses—black, and coarse as a horse's mane—that

already she had roughly braided. A pail of water stood beside her; and around lay scatter'd a score or more of long thorns, cut to the shape of hair-pins.

'Tis probable that after a minute's watching I let some laughter escape me. At any rate Joan turned, spied me, and scrambled up, with an angry red on her cheek. Then I saw that her bodice was neater lac'd than usual, and a bow of yellow ribbon (fish'd up heaven knows whence) stuck in the bosom. But the strangest thing was to note the effect of this new tidiness upon her: for she took a step forward as if to cuff me by the ear (as, a day ago, she would have done), and then stopp'd, very shy and hesitating.

"Why, Joan," said I, "don't be anger'd. It suits you choicely—it does indeed."

"Art scoffing, I doubt." She stood looking heavily and askance at me.

"On my faith, no: and what a rare tiring-bower the Jew's Kitchen makes! Come, Joan, be debonair and talk to me, for I am out of luck to-day."

"Forgit it, then" (and she pointed to the sun), "whiles yet some o't is left. Tell me a tale, an thou'rt minded."

"Of what?"

"O' the bloodiest battle thou'st ever heard tell on."

So, sitting by the mouth of the Jew's Kitchen, I told her as much as I could remember out of Homer's Iliad, wondering the while what my tutor, Mr. Josias How, of Trinity College, would think to hear me so use his teaching. By-and-bye, as I warm'd to the tale, Joan forgot her new smartness; and at length, when Hector was running from Achilles round the walls, clapp'd her hands for excitement, crying, "Church an' King, lad! Oh, brave work!"

"Why, no," answered I, "'twas not for that they were fighting;" and looking at her, broke off with, "Joan, art certainly a handsome girl: give me a kiss for the mirror."

Instead of flying out, as I look'd for, she faced round, and answered me gravely—

"That I will not: not to any but my master."

"And who is that?"

"No man yet; nor shall be till one has beat me sore: him will I love, an' follow like a dog—if so be he whack me often enow'."

"A strange way to love," laughed I.

She look'd at me straight, albeit with an odd gloomy light in her eyes.

"Think so, Jack? then I give thee leave to try."

I think there is always a brutality lurking in a man

to leap out unawares. Yet why do I seek excuses, that have never yet found one? To be plain, I sprang fiercely up and after Joan, who had already started, and was racing along the slope.

Twice around the tor she led me: and though I strain'd my best, not a yard could I gain upon her, for her bare feet carried her light and free. Indeed, I was losing ground, when coming to the Jew's Kitchen a second time, she tried to slip inside and shut the stone in my face.

Then should I have been prettily bemock'd, had I not, with a great effort, contrived to thrust my boot against the door just as it was closing. Wrenching it open, I laid hand on her shoulder; and in a moment she had gript me, and was wrestling like a wild-cat.

Now being Cumberland-bred I knew only the wrestling of my own county, and nothing of the Cornish style. For in the north they stand well apart, and try to wear down one another's strength: whereas the Cornish is a brisker lighter play—and (as I must confess) prettier to watch. So when Joan rush'd in and closed with me, I was within an ace of being thrown, pat.

But recovering, I got her at arm's length, and held her so, while my heart ach'd to see my fingers gripping her shoulders and sinking into the flesh. I begg'd off;

She put her hand in mine.

"To fight, lad?"

I nodded my head.

"Then go," she said without a shake in her voice; and as I made no answer, went on—"Shall a woman hinder when there's fightin' toward? Only come back when thy wars be over, for I shall miss thee, Jack."

And dropping my hand she led the way down to the cottage.

"Now Billy, of course, had not heard a word of this: but perhaps he gather'd some import. Any way, he pull'd up short midway on the slope, scratch'd his head, and thunder'd—

"What a good lass!"

Joan, some paces ahead, turn'd at this and smil'd: whereat, having no idea he'd spoken above a whisper, Billy blusht red as any peony.

'Twas but a short half-hour when, the mare being saddled and Billy fed, we took our leave of Joan. Billy walked beside one stirrup, and the girl on the other side, to see us a few yards on our way. At length she halted—

"No leave-takin's, Jack, but 'Church and King!' Only do thy best and not disgrace me."

And "Church and King!" she call'd thrice after

us, standing in the road. For me, as I rode up out of that valley, the drums seem'd beating and the bugles calling to a new life ahead. The last light of day was on the tors, the air blowing fresher as we mounted : and with Molly's every step the past five months appear'd to dissolve and fall away from me as a dream.

On the crest, I turn'd in the saddle. Joan was yet standing there, a black speck on the road. She waved her hand once.

Billy had turn'd too, and, uncovering, shouted so that the hill-tops echoed.

"A good lass—a good lass ! But what's become o' t'other one?"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BATTLE OF STAMFORD HEATH.

NIGHT came, and found us but midway between Temple and Launceston: for tho' my comrade stepp'd briskly beside me, 'twas useless to put Molly beyond a walk; and besides, the mare was new from her day's journey. This troubled me the less by reason of the moon (now almost at the full), and the extreme whiteness of the road underfoot, so that there was no fear of going astray. And Billy engaged that by sunrise we should be in sight of the King's troops.

"Nay, Jack," he said, when by signs I offered him to ride and tie: "never rode o' horseback but once, and then 'pon Parson Spinks his red mare at Bideford. Parson i' those days was courtin' the Widow Hambly, over to Torrington: an' I, that wanted to fare to Barnstaple, spent that mornin' an' better part o' th' afternoon, clawin' off Torrington. And th' end was the larboard haliards broke, an' the mare gybed, an' to Torrington I went before the wind, wi' an unseemly bloody nose. 'Lud!' cries the widow, 'tis the wrong man 'pon the

right horse!’ ‘Pardon, mistress,’ says I, ‘the man is well enow, but ’pon the wrong horse, for sure.’”

Now and then, as we went, I would dismount and lead Molly by the bridle for a mile or so: and all the way to Launceston Billy was recounting his adventures since our parting. It appear’d that, after leaving me, they had come to Plymouth with a fair passage: but before they could unlade, had advertisement of the Governor’s design to seize all vessels then riding in the Sound, for purposes of war; and so made a quick escape by night into Looe Haven, where they had the fortune to part with the best part of their cargo at a high profit. ’Twas while unlading here that Billy had a mind to pay a debt he ow’d to a cousin of his at Altarnun, and, leaving Matt. Soames in charge, had tramped northward through Liskeard to Launceston, where he found the Cornish forces, and was met by the news of the Earl of Stamford’s advance in the north-east. Further, meeting, in Sir Bevill’s troop, with some north-coast men of his acquaintance, he fell to talking, and so learnt about me and my ride towards Braddock, which (it seem’d) was now become common knowledge. This led him to seek Sir Bevill, with the result that you know: “for,” as he wound up, “’tis a desirable an’ rare delight to pay a debt au’ see some fun, together.”

"Good turn for good turn," says he: "quick with thy other pistol!"

The other two had stopped doubtfully, but at the next discharge of my pistol they turn'd tail and went up the hill again, and we were left alone. And suddenly I grew aware that my head was aching fit to split, and lay down on the turf, very sick and ill.

My comrade took no notice of this, but, going for the dead man's musket, kept loading and firing, pausing now and then for his artillery to cool, and whistling a tune that runs in my head to this day. And all the time I heard shouts and cries and the noise of musketry all around, which made me judge that the attack was going on in many places at once. When I came to myself 'twas to hear a bugle below calling again to the charge, and once more came the two troops ascending. At their head was a slight-built man, bare-headed, with the sun (that was by this, high over the hill) smiting on his brown curls, and the wind blowing them. He carried a naked sword in his hand, and waved his men forward as cheerfully as though 'twere a dance and he leading out his partner.

"Who is that yonder?" asked I, sitting up and pointing.

"Bless thy innocent heart!" said my comrade, "dostn't thee know? 'Tis Sir Bevill."

* * * * *

'Twould be tedious to tell the whole of this long fight, which, beginning soon after sunrise, ended not till four in the afternoon, or thereabouts: and indeed of the whole my recollection is but of continual advance and repulse on that same slope. And herein may be seen the wisdom of our generals, in attacking while the main body of the enemy's horse was away: for had the Earl of Stamford possessed a sufficient force of dragoons to let slip on us at the first discomfiture, there is little doubt he might have ended the battle there and then. As it was, the horse stood out of the fray, theirs upon the summit of the hill, ours (under Col. John Digby) on the other slope, to protect the town and act as reserve.

The foot, in four parties, was disposed about the hill on all sides: to the west—as we know—under Sir John Berkeley and Sir Bevill Grenville; to the south under General Hopton and Lord Mohun; to the east under the Colonels Tom Basset and William Godolphin; while the steep side to the north was stormed by Sir Nicholas Slanning and Colonel Godolphin, with their companies. And as we had but eight small pieces of

cannon and were in numbers less than one to two, all we had to do was to march up the hill in face of their fire, catch a knock on the head, maybe, grin, and come on again.

But at three o'clock, we, having been for the sixth time beaten back, were panting under cover of a hedge, and Sir John Berkeley, near by, was writing on a drum-head some message to the camp, when there comes a young man on horseback, his face smear'd with dirt and dust, and rides up to him and Sir Bevill. 'Twas (I have since learnt) to say that the powder was all spent but a barrel or two: but this only the captains knew at the time.

"Very well, then," cries Sir Bevill, leaping up gaily. "Come along, boys—we must do it this time." And, the troop forming, once more the trumpets sounded the charge, and up we went. Away along the slope we heard the other trumpeters sounding in answer, and I believe 'twas a *sursum corda!* to all of us.

Billy Pottery was ranged on my right, in the first rank, and next to me, on the other side, a giant, near seven foot high, who said his name was Anthony Payne and his business to act as body-servant to Sir Bevill. And he it was that struck up a mighty curious song in the Cornish tongue, which the rest took up with a will.

'Twas incredible how it put fire into them all : and Sir Bevill tost his hat into the air, and after him like schoolboys we pelted, straight for the masses ahead.

For now over the rampart came a company of red musketeers, and two of russet-clad pikemen, charging down on us. A moment, and we were crushed back : another, and the chant rose again. We were grappling, hand to hand, in the midst of their files.

But, good luck ! What use is swordsmanship in a charge like this ? The first red-coat that encounter'd me I had spitted through the lung, and, carried on by the rush, he twirled me round like a windmill. In an instant I was pass'd ; the giant stepping before me and clearing a space about him, using his pike as if 'twere a flail. With a wrench I tugg'd my sword out and followed. I saw Sir Bevill, a little to the left, beaten to his knee, and carried towards me. Stretching out a hand I pull'd him on his feet again, catching, as I did so, a crack on the skull that would have ended me, had not Billy Pottery put up his pike and broke the force of it. Next, I remember gripping another red-coat by the beard and thrusting at him with shorten'd blade. Then the giant ahead lifted his pike high, and we fought to rally round it ; and with that I seem'd caught off my feet and swept forward :—and we were on the crest.

Taking breath, I saw the enemy melting off the summit like a man's breath off a pane. And Sir Bevill caught my hand and pointed across to where, on the north side, a white standard embroider'd with gold griffins was mounting.

"'Tis dear Nick Slanning!" he cried: "God be prais'd—the day is ours for certain!"

CHAPTER XVII.

I MEET WITH A HAPPY ADVENTURE BY BURNING
OF A GREEN LIGHT.

THE rest of this signal victory (in which 1,700 prisoners were taken, besides the Major-General Chudleigh; and all the rebels' camp, cannon and victuals) I leave historians to tell. For very soon after the rout was assured (the plain below full of men screaming and running, and Col. John Digby's dragoons after them, chasing, cutting, and killing), a wet muzzle was thrust into my hand, and turning, I found Molly behind me, with the groom to whom I had given her in the morning. The rogue had counted on a crown for his readiness, and swore the mare was ready for anything, he having mixt half a pint of strong ale with her mash, not half an hour before.

So I determin'd to see the end of it, and paying the fellow, climb'd into the saddle. On the summit the Cornish captains were now met, and cordially embracing. 'Tis very sad in these latter times to call back their shouts and boyish laughter, so soon to be quencht on Lansdowne slopes, or by Bristol graff. Yet, O

favour'd ones !—to chase Victory, to grasp her flutt'ring skirt, and so, with warm, panting cheeks, kissing her, to fall, escaping evil days !

How could they laugh ? For me, the late passionate struggle left me shaken with sobs ; and for the starting tears I saw neither moors around, nor sun, nor twinkling sea. Brushing them away, I was aware of Billy Pottery striding at my stirrup, and munching at a biscuit he had found in the rebels' camp. Said he, " In season, Jack, is in reason. There be times to sing an' to dance, to marry and to give in marriage ; an' likewise times to become as wax : but now, lookin' about an' seein' no haughty slaughterin' cannon but has a Cornishman seated 'pon the touch-hole of the same, says I in my thoughtsome way, ' Forbear ! ' "

Presently he pulls up before a rebel trooper, that was writhing on the slope with a shatter'd thigh, yet raised himself on his fists to gaze on us with wide, painful eyes.

" Good sirs," gasp'd out the rebel, " can you tell me—where be Nat Shipward ? "

" Now how should I know ? " I answer'd.

" 'A had nutty-brown curls, an' wore a red jacket—Oh, as straight a young man as ever pitched hay ! ' a

served in General Chudleigh's troop—a very singular straight young man."

"Death has taken a many such," said I, and thought on the man I had run through in our last charge.

"The fellow groaned. "'A was my son," he said: and though Billy pull'd out a biscuit (his pockets bulged with them) and laid it beside him, he turn'd from it, and sank back on the turf again.

We left him, and now, the descent being gentler, broke into a run, in hopes to catch up with Col. John Digby's dragoons, that already were far across the next vale. The slope around us was piled with dead and dying, whereof four out of every five were rebels; and cruelly they cursed us as we pass'd them by. Night was coming on apace; and here already we were in deep shadow, but could see the yellow sun on the hills beyond. We crossed a stream at the foot, and were climbing again. Behind us the cheering yet continued, though fainter: and fainter grew the cries and shouting in front. Soon we turn'd into a lane over a steep hedge, under the which two or three stout rebels were cowering. As we came tumbling almost atop of them, they ran yelling: and we let them go in peace.

The lane gradually led us to westward, out of the

main line of the rout, and past a hamlet where every door was shut and all silent. And at last a slice of the sea fronted us, between two steeply shelving hills. On the crest of the road, before it plunged down towards the coast, was a waggon lying against the hedge, with the horses gone: and beside it, stretch'd across the road, an old woman. Stopping, we found her dead, with a sword-thrust through the left breast; and inside the waggon a young man lying, with his jaw bound up, —dead also. And how this sad spectacle happen'd here, so far from the battle-field, was more than we could guess.

I was moving away, when Billy, that was kneeling in the road, chanced to cast his eyes up towards the sea, and dropping the dead woman's hand scrambled on his feet and stood looking, with a puzzled face.

Following his gaze, I saw a small sloop moving under shorten'd canvas, about two miles from the land. She made a pleasant sight, with the last rays of sunlight flaming on her sails: but for Billy's perturbation I could not account, so turn'd an enquiring glance to him.

"Suthin' i' the wind out yonder," was his answer: "What's a sloop doing on that ratch so close in by the point? Be dang'd! but there she goes again;"—as

the little vessel swung off a point or two further from the breeze, that was breathing softly up Channel. "Time to sup, lad, for the both of us," he broke off shortly.

Indeed, I was faint with hunger by this time, yet had no stomach to eat thus close to the dead. So turning into a gate on our left hand, we cross'd two or three fields, and sat down to sup off Billy's biscuits, the mare standing quietly beside us, and cropping the short grass.

The field where we now found ourselves ran out along the top of a small promontory, and ended, without fence of any sort, at the cliff's edge. As I sat looking southward, I could only observe the sloop by turning my head : but Billy, who squatted over against me, hardly took his eyes off her, and between this and his meal was too busy to speak a word. For me, I had enough to do thinking over the late fight : and being near worn out, had half a mind to spend the night there on the hard turf : for, though the sun was now down and the landscape grey, yet the air was exceeding warm : and albeit, as I have said, there breath'd a light breeze now and then, 'twas hardly cool enough to dry the sweat off me. So I stretch'd myself out, and found it very pleasant to lie still ; nor, when Billy stood up

and sauntered off towards the far end of the headland, did I stir more than to turn my head and lazily watch him.

He was gone half-an-hour at the least, and the sky by this time was so dark, that I had lost sight of him, when, rising on my elbow to look around, I noted a curious red glow at a point where the turf broke off, not three hundred yards behind me, and a thin smoke curling up in it, as it seem'd, from the very face of the cliff below. In a minute or so the smoke ceased almost; but the shine against the sky continued steady, tho' not very strong. "Billy has lit a fire," I guessed, and was preparing to go and look, when I spied a black form crawling towards me, and presently saw 'twas Billy himself.

Coming close, he halted, put a finger to his lip and beckoned: then began to lead the way back as he had come.

Thought I, "these are queer doings:" but left Molly to browse, and crept after him on hands and knees. He turn'd his head once to make sure I was following, and then scrambled on quicker, but softly, towards the point where the red glow was shining.

Once more he pull'd up—as I judg'd, about twelve paces' distance from the edge—and after considering for

a second, began to move again; only now he worked a little to the right. And soon I saw the intention of this: for just here the cliff's lip was cleft by a fissure—very like that in Scawfell which we were used to call the *Lord's Rake*, only narrower—that ran back into the field and shelved out gently at the top, so that a man might easily scramble some way down it, tho' how far I could not then tell. And 'twas from this fissure that the glow came.

Along the right lip of this Billy led me, skirting it by a couple of yards, and wriggling on his belly like a blind-worm. Crawling closer now (for 'twas hard to see him against the black turf), I stopp'd beside him and strove to quiet the violence of my breathing. Then, after a minute's pause, together we pulled ourselves to the edge, and peer'd over.

The descent of the gully was broken, some eight feet below us, by a small ledge, sloping outwards about six feet (as I guess), and screen'd by branches of the wild tamarisk. At the back, in an angle of the solid rock, was now set a pan pierced with holes, and full of burning charcoal: and over this a man in the rebels' uniform was stooping.

He had a small paper parcel in his left hand, and was blowing at the charcoal with all his might. Holding

my breath, I heard him clearly, but could see nothing of his face, for his back was towards us, all sable against the glow. The charcoal fumes as they rose chok'd me so, that I was very near a fit of coughing, when Billy laid one hand on my shoulder, and with the other pointed out to sea-ward.

Looking that way, I saw a small light shining on the sea, pretty close in. 'Twas a lantern hung out from the sloop, as I concluded on the instant: and now I began to have an inkling of what was toward.

But looking down again at the man with the charcoal-pan I saw a black head of hair lifted, and then a pair of red puff'd cheeks, and a pimpled nose with a scar across the bridge of it—all shining in the glare of the pan.

"Powers of Heaven!" I gasped; "'tis that bloody villain Luke Settle!"

And springing to my feet, I took a jump over the edge and came sprawling on top of him. The scoundrel was stooping with his nose close to the pan, and had not time to turn before I lit with a thud on his shoulders, flattening him on the ledge and nearly sending his face on top of the live coals. 'Twas so sudden that, before he could so much as think, my fingers were about his windpipe, and the both of us struggling flat on the

brink of the precipice. For he had a bull's strength, and heaved and kicked, so that I fully looked, next moment, to be flying over the edge into the sea: nor could I loose my grip to get out a pistol, but only held on and worked my fingers in, and thought how he had strangled the mastiff that night on the bowling-green, and vowed to serve him the same if only strength held out.

But now, just as he had almost twisted his neck free, I heard a stone or two break away above us, and down came Billy Pottery flying atop of us, and pinned us to the ledge.

'Twas short work now. Within a minute, Captain Luke Settle was turned on his back, his eyes fairly starting with Billy's clutch on his throat, his mouth wide open and gasping; till I slipp'd the nozzle of my pistol between his teeth; and with that he had no more chance, but gave in, and like a lamb submitted to have his arms truss'd behind him with Billy's leathern belt, and his legs with his own.

"Now," said I, standing over him, and putting the pistol against his temple, "you and I, Master Turncoat Settle, have some accounts that 'twould be well to square. So first tell me, what do you here, and where is Mistress Delia Killigrew?"

I think that till this moment the bully had no idea his assailants were more than a chance couple of Cornish troopers. But now seeing the glow of the burning charcoal on my face, he ripped out a horrid blasphemous curse, and straightway fell to speaking calmly.

"Good sirs, the game is yours, with care. S'lid! but you hold a pretty hand—if only you know how to play it."

"'Tis you shall help me, Captain: but let us be clear about the stakes. For you, 'tis life or death: for me, 'tis to regain Mistress Delia, failing which I shoot you here through the head, and topple you into the sea. You are the Knave of trumps, sir, and I play that card: as matters now stand, only the Queen can save you."

"Right: but where be King and Ace?"

"The King is the Cornish army, yonder: the Ace is my pistol here, which I hold."

"And that's a very pretty comprehension of the game, sir: I play the Queen."

"Where is she?"

For answer, he pointed seaward, where the sloop's lantern lay like a floating star on the black waters.

"What!" cried I. "Mistress Delia in that sloop! And who is with her, pray?"

"Why, Black Dick, to begin with—and Reuben Gedges—and Jeremy Toy."

"All the Knaves left in the pack—God help her!" I muttered, as I look'd out towards the light, and my heart beat heavily. "God help her!" I said again, and turning, spied a grin on the Captain's face.

"Under Providence," answered he, "your unworthy servant may suffice. But what is my reward to be?"

"Your neck," said I, "if I can save it when you are led before the Cornish captains."

"That's fair enough: so listen. These few months the lady has been shut in Bristol keep, whither, by the advice of our employer, we conveyed her back safe and sound. This same employer——"

"A dirty rogue, whom you may as well call by his name—Hannibal Tingcomb."

"Right, young sir: a very dirty rogue, and a niggardly:—I hate a mean rascal. Well, fearing her second escape from that prison, and being hand in glove with the Parliament men, he gets her on board a sloop bound for the Virginias, just at the time when he knows the Earl of Stamford is to march and crush the Cornishmen. For escort she has the three comrades of mine that I named: and the captain of the sloop (a fellow

that asks no questions) has orders to cruise along the coast hereabouts till he get news of the battle."

"Which you were just now about to give him," cried I, suddenly enlighten'd.

"Right again. 'Twas a pretty scheme: for—d'ye see?—if all went well with the Earl of Stamford, the King's law would be wiped out in Cornwall, and Master Tingcomb (with his claims and meritorious services) might snap his thumb thereat. So, in that case, Mistress Delia was to be brought ashore here and taken to him, to serve as he fancied. But if the day should go against us—as it has—she was to sail to the Virginias with the sloop, and there be sold as a slave. Or worse might happen; but I swear that is the worst was ever told me."

"God knows 'tis vile enough," said I, scarce able to refrain from blowing his brains out. "So you were to follow the Earl's army, and work the signals. Which are they?" For a quick resolve had come into my head, and I was casting about to put it into execution.

"A green light if we won: if not, a red light, to warn the sloop away."

I picked up the packet that had dropp'd from his hand when first I sprang upon him. It was burst

abroad, and a brown powder trickling from it about the ledge.

"This was the red light—to be sprinkled on the burning charcoal, I suppose?"

The fellow nodded. At the same moment, Billy (who as yet had not spoke a word, and of course, understood nothing) thrust into my hand another packet that he had found stuck in a corner against the rock.

"Now tell me—in case the rebels won, where was the landing to be made?"

"In the cove below here—where the road leads down."

"Aye, the road where the waggon stood."

Captain Luke Settle blink'd his eyes at this: but nodded after a moment.

"And how many would escort her?"

He caught my drift and laughed softly—

"Be damn'd, sir, but I begin to love you, for you play the game very proper and soundly. Reuben, Jeremy, and Black Dick alone are in the plot; so why should more escort her? For the skipper and crew have their own business to look after."

"Then, Master Settle, tho' it be a sore trial to you, those three Knaves you must give me, or I play my Ace," and I pressed the ring of my pistol sharply against his ear as a reminder.

"With all my heart, young sir, you shall have them," says he briskly.

"And this is 'honour among thieves,'" thought I : "You would sell your comrade as you sold your King : " but only said, "If you cry out, or speak one word to warn them——"

Before I could get my sentence out, Billy Pottery broke in with a voice like a trumpet—

"As folks go, Jack, I be a humorous man. But sittin' here, an' ponderin' this way an' that, I says, in my deaf an' afflicted style, 'Why not shoot the ugly rogue, if mirth, indeed, be your object ?' For to wait till an uglier comes to this untravell'd spot is superfluity."

How to explain matters to Billy was more than I could tell : but in a moment he himself supplied the means. For the rocks here were of some kind of slate, very hard, but scaly : and finding two pieces, a large and a small, he handed them to me, bawling that I was to write therewith. So giving him my pistol, I made shift to scribble a few words. Seeing his eyes twinkle as he read, I stood up.

The charcoal by this time was a glowing mass of red : and threw so clear a light on us that I feared the crew on board the sloop might see our forms and suspect their misadventure. But the lantern still hung steadily :

so signing to Billy to drag our prisoner behind a tamarisk bush, I open'd the second packet, and poured some of the powder into my hand.

It was composed of tiny crystals, yellow and flaky : and holding it, for a moment I was possessed with a horrid fear that this might be the signal to warn the sloop away. I flung a look at the Captain : who read my thoughts on the instant.

“Never fear, young sir : am no such hero as to sell my life for that tag-rag. Only make haste, for your deaf friend has a cursed ugly way of fumbling his pistol.”

So taking heart, I tore the packet wide, and shook out the powder on the coals.

Instantly there came a dense choking vapour, and a vivid green flare that turned the rocks, the sky, and our faces to a ghastly brilliance. For two minutes, at least, this unnatural light lasted. As soon as it died away and the fumes clear'd, I look'd seaward.

The lantern on the sloop was moving in answer to the signal. Three times it was lifted and lower'd : and then in the stillness I heard voices calling, and soon after the regular splash of oars.

There was no time to be lost. Pulling the Captain to his feet, we scrambled up the gully, and out at the

top, and across the fields as fast as our legs would take us. Molly came to my call and trotted beside me—the Captain following some paces behind, and Billy last, to keep a safe watch on his movements.

At the gate, however, where we turned into the road, I tethered the mare, lest the sound of her hoofs should betray us: and down towards the sea we pelted, till almost at the foot of the hill I pull'd up and listen'd, the others following my example.

We could hear the sound of oars plain above the wash of waves on the beach. I look'd about me. On either side the road was now bank'd by tall hills, with clusters of bracken and furze bushes lying darkly on their slopes. Behind one of these clusters I station'd Billy with the Captain's long sword, and a pistol that I by signs forbade him to fire unless in extremity. Then, retiring some forty paces up the road, I hid the Captain and myself on the other side.

Hardly were we thus disposed, before I heard the sound of a boat grounding on the beach below, and the murmur of voices; and then the noise of feet trampling the shingle. Upon which I ordered my prisoner to give a hail, which he did readily.

“Ahoy, Dick! Ahoy, Reuben Geddes!”

In a moment or two came the answer—

"Ahoy, there, Captain—here we be!"

"Fetch along the cargo!" shouted Captain Settle, on my prompting.

"Where be you?"

"Up the road, here—waiting!"

"One minute, then—wait one minute, Captain!"

I heard the boat push'd off, some *Good-nights* call'd, and then (with tender anguish) the voice of my Delia lifted in entreaty. As I guess'd, she was beseeching the sailors to take her back to the sloop, nor leave her to these villains. There follow'd an oath or two growl'd out, a short scrimmage, and at last, above the splash of the retreating boat, came the tramp of heavy feet on the road below.

So fired was I at the sound of Delia's voice, that 'twas with much ado I kept quiet behind the bush. Yet I had wit enough left to look to the priming of my pistol, and also to bid the Captain shout again. As he did so, a light shone out down the road, and round the corner came a man bearing a lantern.

"Can't be quicker, Captain," he called: "the jade struggles so that Dick and Jeremy ha' their hands full."

Sure enough, after him there came in view two stooping forms that bore my dear maid between them—

one by the feet, the other by the shoulders. I ground my teeth to see it, for she writhed sorely. On they came, however, until not more than ten paces off; and then that traitor, Luke Settle, rose up behind our bush.

"Set her here, boys," said he, "and tie her pretty ankles."

"Well met, Captain!" said the fellow with the lantern—Reuben Geddes—stepping forward: "Give us your hand!"

He was holding out his own, when I sprang up, set the pistol close to his chest, and fired. His scream mingled with the roar of it, and dropping the lantern, he threw up his hands and tumbled in a heap. At the same moment, out went the light, and the other rascals, dropping Delia, turn'd to run, crying, "Sold—sold!"

But behind them came now a shout from Billy, and a crashing blow that almost severed Black Dick's arm at the shoulder: and at the same instant I was on Master Toy's collar, and had him down in the dust. Kneeling on his chest, with my sword-point at his throat, I had leisure to glance at Billy, who in the dark, seem'd to be sitting on the head of his disabled victim. And then I felt a touch on my shoulder, and a dear face peer'd into mine.

“Is it Jack—my sweet Jack?”

“To be sure,” said I: “and if you but reach out your hand, I will kiss it, for all that I’m busy with this rogue.”

“Nay, Jack, I’ll kiss thee on the cheek—so! Dear lad, I am so frighten’d, and yet could laugh for joy!”

But now I caught the sound of galloping on the road above, and shouts, and then more galloping; and down came a troop of horsemen that were like to have ridden over us, had I not shouted lustily.

“Who, in the fiend’s name is here?” shouted the foremost, pulling in his horse with a scramble.

“Honest men and rebels together,” I answered; “but light the lantern that you will find handy by, and you shall know one from t’other.”

By the time ’twas found and lit, there was a dozen of Col. John Digby’s dragoons about us: and before the two villains were bound, comes a half-dozen more, leading in Captain Settle, that had taken to his heels at the first blow and climb’d the hill, all tied as he was about the hands, and was caught in his endeavour to clamber on Molly’s back. So he and Black Dick and Jeremy Toy were strapp’d up: but Reuben Geddes we left on the road for a corpse. Yet he did not die (though shot

through the lung), but recovered—heaven knows how: and I myself had the pleasure to see him hanged at Tyburn, in the second year of his late Majesty's most blessed Restoration, for stopping the Bishop of Salisbury's coach, in Maidenhead Thicket, and robbing the Bishop himself, with much added contumely.

But as we were ready to start, and I was holding Delia steady on Molly's back, up comes Billy and bawls in my ear—

“There's a second horse, if wanted, that I spied tether'd under a hedge yonder”—and he pointed to the field where we had first found Captain Settle—“in colour a sad black, an' harness'd like as if he came from a cart.”

I look'd at the Captain, who in the light of the lantern blink'd again. “Thou bloody villain!” muttered I, for now I read the tragedy of the waggon beside the road, and knew how Master Settle had provided a horse for his own escape.

But hereupon the word was given, and we started up the hill, I walking by Delia's stirrup and listening to her talk as if we had never been parted—yet with a tenderer joy, having by loss of it learnt to appraise my happiness aright.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JOAN DOES ME HER LAST SERVICE.

WE came, a little before midnight, to Sir Bevill's famous great house of Stow, near Kilkhampton: that to-night was brightly lit and full of captains and troopers feasting, as well they needed to, after the great victory. And here, though loth to do so, I left Delia to the care of Lady Grace Grenville, Sir Bevill's fond beautiful wife, and of all gentlewomen I have ever seen the pink and paragon, as well for her loyal heart as the graces of her mind: who, before the half of our tale was out, kissed Delia on both cheeks, and led her away. "To you too, sir, I would counsel bed," said she, "after you have eaten and drunk, and especially given God thanks for this day's work."

Sir Bevill I did not see, but striding down into the hall, picked my way among the drinking and drunken; the servants hurrying with dishes of roast and baked and great tankards of beer; the swords and pikes flung down under the forms and settles, and sticking out to trip a man up; and at length found a groom who led me to a loft over one of the barns: and here, above a

mattress of hay, I slept the first time for many months between fresh linen that smelt of lavender, and in thinking how pleasant 'twas, dropp'd sound asleep.

Sure there is no better, sweeter couch than this of linen spread over hay. Early in the morning, I woke with wits clear as water, and not an ache or ounce of weariness in my bones: and after washing at the pump below, went in search of breakfast and Sir Bevill. The one I found, ready laid, in the hall; the other seated in his writing-room, studying in a map: and with apology for my haste, handed him Master Tingcomb's confession and told my story.

When 'twas over, Sir Bevill sat pondering, and after a while said, very frankly—

“As a magistrate I can give this warrant; and 'twould be a pleasure, for well, as a boy, do I remember Deakin Killigrew. Young sir——” he rose up, and taking a turn across the room, came and laid a hand on my shoulder, “I have seen his daughter. Is it too late to warn you against loving her?”

“Why yes,” I answer'd blushing: “I think it is.”

“She seems both sweet and quaint. God forbid I should say a word against one that has so taken me! But in these times a man should stand alone: to make a

friend is to run the chance of a soft heart: to marry a wife makes the chance sure——”

He broke off, and went on again with a change of tone—

“For many reasons I would blithely issue this warrant. But how am I to spare men to carry it out? At any moment we may be assail’d.”

“If that be your concern, sir,” answer’d I, “give me the warrant. I have a good friend here, a seafaring man, whose vessel lies at this moment in Looe Haven, with a crew on board that will lay Master Tingcomb by the heels in a trice. Within three days we’ll have him clapt in Launceston Gaol, and there at the next Assize you shall sit on the Grand Jury and hear his case, by which time, I hope, the King’s law shall run on easier wheels in Cornwall. The prisoners we have already I leave you to deal withal: only, against my will, I must claim some mercy for that rogue, Settle.”

To this Sir Bevill consented; and, to be short, the three knaves were next morning pack’d off to Launceston: but in time, no evidence being brought against them, regain’d their freedom, which they used to come to the gallows, each in his own way. Their doings no longer concern this history, and so I gladly leave them.

To return, then, to my proper tale, 'twas not ten minutes before I had the warrant in my pocket. And by eleven o'clock (word having been carried to Delia, and our plans laid before Billy Pottery, who on the spot engaged himself to help us) our horses were brought round to the gate, and my mistress appear'd, all ready for the journey. For tho' assured that the work needed not her presence, and that she had best wait at Stow till Master Tingcomb was smok'd out of his nest, she would have none of it, but was set on riding with me to see justice done on this fellow, of whose villainy I had told her much the night before. And glad I was of her choice, as I saw her standing on the entrance steps, fresh as a rose, and in a fit habit once more : for Lady Grace had lent not only her own bay horse, but also a riding-dress and hat of grey velvet to equip her : and stood in the porch to wish us *God-speed !* while Sir Bevill help'd Delia to the saddle.

So, with Billy tramping behind us, away we rode up the combe, where Kilkhampston tower stood against the sky ; and turning to wave hands at the top, found our host and hostess still by the gate, watching us, with hands rais'd to shield their eyes from the sun.

The whole petty tale of this day's ride I shall not dwell upon. Indeed, I scarcely noted the miles as they pass'd.

For all the way we were chattering, Delia telling me how Captain Settle and his gang had hurried her (tho' without indignity) across Dartmoor to Ashburton, thence to Lynton in North Devon, and so along the coast of Somerset to Bristol; how they there produced a paper, at sight of which Sir Nathaniel Fiennes, the new Governor, kept her under lock and key. And thus she remain'd four months, at the end of which time they convey'd her on board a sloop, call'd the *Fortitude*, and bound for the Virginias, with the result that has been told. To all of which I listen'd greedily, stealing from time to time a look at her shape, that on horseback was graceful as a willow, and into her eyes that, under the flapping grey brim, were gay and fancy-free as ever.

"And did you," asked I, "never at heart chide me for leaving you so!"

"Why no. I never took thee for a conjurer, Jack."

"But, at least, you thought of me," I urged.

"Oh, dear—oh, dear!" She pull'd rein and look'd at me: "I remember now that last night I kiss'd thee. Forget it, Jack: last night, so glad was I to be sav'd, I could have kiss'd a cobbler. Indeed, Jack," she went on seriously, "I would that some maid had got

breeches, heavy boots, and all. Her back was towards me, and at the shoulder, where the coat had been cut away from my wound, I saw the rents all darn'd and patch'd with pack-thread. In her hand was the mirror I had given her.

At the sound of my step on the threshold she turn'd with a short cry—a cry the like of which I have never heard, so full was it of choking joy. The glass dropp'd to the floor and was shatter'd. In a second her arms were about me, and so she hung on my neck, sobbing and laughing together.

"'Twas true—'twas true! Dear, dear Jack—dear Jack to come to me: hold me tighter, tighter—for my very heart is bursting!"

And behind me a shadow fell on the doorway: and there stood Delia regarding us.

"Good lad—all yesterday I swore to be strong and wait—for years, if need be. Fie on womankind, to be so weak! All day I sat an' sat, an' did never a mite o' work—never set hand to a tool: an' by sunset I gave in an' went, cursing mysel', over the moor to Warleggan, to Alsie Pascoe, the wise woman—an' she taught me a charm—an' bless her, bless her, Jack, for 't hath brought thee!"

"Joan," said I, hot with shame, taking her

arms gently from my neck : "listen : I come because I am chased. Once more the dragooners are after me—not five minutes away. You must lend me a horse, and at once."

"Nay," said a voice in the doorway, "the horse, if lent, is for *me* !"

Joan turn'd, and the two women stood looking at each other;—the one with dark wonder, the other with cold disdainfulness—and I between them scarce lifting my eyes. Each was beautiful after her kind, as day and night : and though their looks cross'd for a full minute like drawn blades, neither had the mastery. Joan was the first to speak.

"Jack, is thy mare in the yard ?"

I nodded.

"Give me thy pistols and thy cloak." She stepp'd to the window-hole at the end of the kitchen, and look'd out. "Plenty o' time," she said ; and pointed to the ladder leading to the loft above—"Climb up there, the both, and pull the ladder after. Is't *thou*, they want—or *she* ?" pointing to Delia.

"Me chiefly they would catch, no doubt—being a man," I answer'd.

"Aye—bein' a man : the world's full o' folly. Then Jack do thou look after *her*, an' I'll look after *thee*. If

the rebels leave thee in peace, make for the Jews' Kitchen and there abide me."

She flung my cloak about her, took my pistols and went out at the door. As she did so, the sun sank and a dull shadow swept over the moor. "Joan!" I cried, for now I guess'd her purpose and was following to hinder her: but she had caught Molly's bridle and was already astride of her. "Get back!" she call'd softly; and then, "I make a better lad than wench, Jack,"—leapt the mare through a gap in the wall, and in a moment was breasting the hill and galloping for the high-road.

In less than a minute, as it seem'd, I heard a pounding of hoofs, and had barely time to follow Delia up the ladder and pull it after me, when two of the dragoons rode skurrying by the house, and pass'd on yelling. Their cries were hardly faint in the distance before there came another three.

"'A's a lost man, now, for sure," said one: "Be dang'd if 'a's not took the road back to Lan'son!"

"How 'bout the gal?" ask'd another voice. "Here's her horse i' the yard."

"Drat the gal! Sam, go thou an' tackle her: reckon thou'rt warriors enow for one 'ooman."

The two hasten'd on: and presently I heard the one

they call'd "Sam" dismounting in the yard. Now there was a window-hole in the loft, facing, not on the yard, but towards the country behind; and running to it I saw that no more were following—the other three having, as I suppose, early given up the chase. Softly pulling out a loose stone or two, I widen'd this hole till I could thrust the ladder out of it. To my joy it just reach'd the ground. I bade Delia squeeze herself through and climb down.

But before she was half way down I heard a wild screech in the kitchen below, and the voice of Sam shrieking—

"Help—help! Lord ha' mercy 'pon me—'tis a black cat—'tis a witch! The gal's no gal, but a witch!"

Laughing softly, I was descending the ladder when the fellow came round the corner screaming—with Jan Tergagle clawing at his back and spitting murderously. Delia had just time to slip aside, before he ran into the ladder and brought me flying on top of him. And there he lay and bellow'd till I tied him, and gagg'd his noise with a big stone in his mouth and his own scarf tied round it.

"Come!" I whisper'd: for Joan and her pursuers were out of sight. Catching up her long skirt, Delia

follow'd me, and up the tor we panted together, nor rested till we were safe in the Jews' Kitchen.

"What think you of this for a hiding-place?" ask'd I, with a laugh.

But Delia did not laugh. Instead, she faced me with blazing eyes, check'd herself and answer'd, cold as ice—

"Sir, you have done me a many favours. How I have trusted you in return it were best for you to remember, and for me to forget."

* * * *

The dark drew on; the western star grew distinct and hung flashing over against our hiding; and still we sat there, hour after hour, silent, angry, waiting for Joan's return, Delia at the entrance of the den, chin on hand, scanning the heavens and never once turning towards me; I further inside, with my arms cross'd, raging against myself and all the world, yet with a sick'ning dread that Joan would never come back.

As the time lagg'd by, this terror grew and grew. But, as I think, about ten o'clock, I heard steps coming over the turf. I ran out. 'Twas Joan herself and leading Molly by the bridle. She walk'd as if tir'd, and leaving the mare at the entrance, follow'd me into the cave. Glancing round, I noted that Delia had slipt away.

"Am glad she's gone," said Joan shortly: "How many rebels pass'd this way, Jack?"

"Five, counting one that lies gagg'd and bound, down at the cottage."

"That leaves four:"—she stretch'd herself on the ground with a sigh—"four that'll never trouble thee more, lad."

"Why? how——"

"Listen, lad: sit down an' let me rest my head 'pon thy knee. Oh, Jack, I did it bravely! Eight good miles an' more I took the mare—by the Four-hol'd Cross, an' across the moor past Tober an' Catshole, an' over Brown Willy, an' round Roughtor to the nor'-west: an' there lies the bravest quag—oh, a black, bottomless hole!—an' into it I led them; an' there they lie, every horse, an' every mother's son, till Judgment Day."

"Dead?"

"Aye—an' the last twain wi' a bullet apiece in their skulls. Oh, rare! Dear heart—hold my head—so, atween thy hands. 'Put on his cast-off duds,' said Alsie, 'an' stand afore the glass, sayin' "Come, true man!" nine-an'-ninety time.' I was mortal 'feard o' losin' count; but afore I got to fifty, I heard thy step an'—hold me closer, Jack."

"But Joan, are these men dead, say you?"

"Surely, yes. Why, lad, what be four rebels, up or down, to make this coil over? Hast never axed after *me*!"

"Joan—you are not hurt?"

In the darkness I sought her eyes, and, peering into them, drew back.

"Joan!"

"Hush, lad—bend down thy head, and let me whisper. I went too near—an' one, that was over his knees, let fly wi' his musket—an' Jack, I have but a minute or two. Hush lad, hush—there's no call! Wert never the man could ha' tam'd me—art the weaker, in a way: forgie the word, for I lov'd thee so, boy Jack!"

Her arms were drawing down my face to her: her eyes dull with pain.

"Feel, Jack—there—over my right breast. I plugg'd the wound wi' a peat turf. Pull it out, for 'tis bleeding inwards, and hurts cruelly—pull it out!"

As I hesitated, she thrust her own hand in and drew it forth, leaving the hot blood to gush.

"An' now, Jack, tighter—hold me tighter. Kiss me—oh, what brave times! Tighter, lad, an' call

wi' me—' Church an' King!' Call, lad—' Church
an'——'”

The warm arms loosen'd : the head sank back upon
my lap.

I look'd up. There was a shadow across the
entrance, blotting out the star of night. 'Twas Delia,
leaning there and listening.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE HEARSE.

THE day-spring came at last, and in the sick light of it I went down to the cottage for spade and pick-axe. In the tumult of my senses I hardly noted that our prisoner, the dragoon, had contrived to slip his bonds and steal off in the night.

And then Delia, seeing me return with the sad tools on my shoulder, spoke for the first time ;

“First, if there be a well near, fetch me two buckets of water, and leave us for an hour.”

Her voice was weary and chill : so that I dared not thank her, but did the errand in silence. Then, but a dozen paces from the spot where Joan’s father lay, I dug a grave and strew’d it with bracken, and heather, and gorse-petals, that in the morning air smelt rarely. And soon after my task was done, Delia call’d me.

In her man’s dress Joan lay, her arms cross’d, her black tresses braided, and her face gentler than ever ’twas in life. Over her wounded breast was a bunch of some tiny pink flower, that grew about the tor.

So I lifted her softly as once in this same place she had lifted me, and bore her down the slope to the grave : and there I buried her, while Delia knelt and pray'd, and Molly browsed, lifting now and then her head to look.

When all was done, we turn'd away, dry-eyed, and walked together to the cottage. The bay horse was feeding on the moor below ; and finding him still too lame to carry Delia, I shifted the saddles, and mending the broken rein, set her on Molly. The cottage door stood open, but we did not enter ; only look'd in, and seeing Jan Tergagle curl'd beside the cold hearth, left him so.

Mile after mile we pass'd in silence, Delia riding, and I pacing beside her with the bay. At last, tortur'd past bearing, I spoke—

“ Delia, have you nothing to say ? ”

For a while she seem'd to consider : then, with her eyes fixt on the hills ahead, answered—

“ Much, if I could speak : but all this has chang'd me somehow—'tis, perhaps, that I have grown a woman, having been a girl—and need to get used to it, and think.”

She spoke not angrily, as I look'd for ; but with a painful slowness that was less hopeful.

"But," said I, "over and over you have shown that I am nought to you. Surely——"

"Surely I am jealous? 'Tis possible—yes, Jack, I am but a woman, and so 'tis certain."

"Why, to be jealous, you must love me!"

She look'd at me straight, and answer'd very deliberate—

"Now that is what I am far from sure of."

"But, dear Delia, when your anger has cool'd ——"

"My anger was brief: I am disappointed, rather. With her last breath, almost, Joan said you were weaker than she: she lov'd you better than I, and read you clearer. You *are* weak. Jack"—she drew in Molly, and let her hand fall on my shoulder very kindly—"we have been comrades for many a long mile, and I hope are honest good friends; wherefore I loathe to say a harsh or ungrateful-seeming word. But you could not understand that brave girl, and you cannot understand me: for as yet you do not even know yourself. The knowledge comes slowly to a man, I think; to a woman at one rush. But when it comes, I believe you may be strong. Now leave me to think, for my head is all of a tangle."

• • • • •

Our pace was so slow (by reason of the lame horse),

that a great part of the afternoon was spent before we came in sight of the House of Gleys. And truly the yellow sunshine had flung some warmth about the naked walls and turrets, so that Delia's home-coming seem'd not altogether cheerless. But what gave us more happiness was to spy, on the blue water beyond, the bright canvas of the *Godsend*, and to hear the cries and stir of Billy Pottery's mariners as they haul'd down the sails.

And Billy himself was on the look-out with his spy-glass. For hardly were we come to the beach when our signal—the waving of a white kerchief—was answer'd by another on board; and within half-an-hour a boat puts off, wherein, as she drew nearer, I counted eight fellows.

They were (besides Billy), Matt. Soames, the master, Gabriel Hutchins, Ned Masters, the black man Sampson, Ben Halliday, and two whose full names I have forgot—but one was call'd Nicholas. And, after many warm greetings, the boat was made fast, and we climbed up along the peninsula together, in close order, like a little army.

All this time there was no sign or sound about the House of Gleys to show that any one mark'd us or noted our movements. The gate was closed, the windows stood

They pass'd out at the small gate, and by the sounds that follow'd, we guess'd they were hoisting their burden into a cart. Presently they recross'd the path and enter'd the house, shutting the door after them.

"Now for it!" said I in Matt.'s ear. Gliding forward, I peep'd out at the postern gate; but drew back like a shot.

I had almost run my head into a great black hearse, that stood there with the door open, back'd against the gate, the heavy plumes nodding above it in the night wind.

Who held the horses I had not time to see: but whispering to Matt. to give me a leg up, clamber'd inside. "Quick!" I pull'd him after, and crept forward. I wonder'd the man did not hear us: but by good luck the horses were restive, and by his maudlin talk to them I knew he was three parts drunk—on the funeral wines, doubtless.

I crept along, and found the tool-chest stow'd against the further end: so, pulling it gently out, we got behind it. Tho' Matt. was the littlest man of my acquaintance, 'twas the work of the world to stow ourselves in such compass as to be hidden. By coiling up our limbs we managed it; but only just before I caught the glimmer of a light and heard the pair of rascals returning.

They came very slow, grumbling all the way ; and of course, I knew they carried the coffin.

"All right, Sim ? " ask'd the minister.

"Aye," piped a squeaky voice by the horse's heads ('twas the shuffling stable-boy), "aye, but look sharp ! Lord, what sounds I've heerd ! The devil's i' the hearse, for sure !"

"Now, Simmy," the one-ey'd gaffer expostulated, "thou dostn' think the smoky King is a-took in, same as they poor folks upstairs ? Tee-hee ! Lord, what a trick !—to come for Master Tingcomb, an' find—aw dear !—aw, bless my old ribs, what a thing is humour !"

"Shut up !" grunted the minister. The end of the coffin was tilted up into the hearse. "Push, old varmint !"

"Aye—push, push ! Where be my young, active sinews ? What a shrivell'd garment is all my comeliness ! 'The devil inside,' says Simmy—haw, haw !"

"Burn the thing ! 'twon't go in for the tool-box. Push, thou cackling old worms !"

"Now so I be, but my natural strength is abated. 'Yo-heave ho !' like the salted seafardingers upstairs. Push, push !"

"Oh, my inwards !" groans poor Matt. under his breath, into whom the chest was squeezing sorely.

"Right at last!" says the minister. "Now, Simmy, my lad, hand the reins an' jump up. There's room, an' you'll be wanted."

The door was clapt-to, the three rogues climb'd upon the seat in front: and we started.

I hope I may never be call'd to pass such another half-hour as that which follow'd. As soon as the wheels left turf for the hard road, 'twas jolt, jolt all the way; and this lying mainly down-hill, the chest and coffin came grinding into our ribs, and pressing till we could scarce breathe. And I dared not climb out over them, for fear the fellows should hear us; their chuckling voices coming quite plain to us from the other side of the panel. I held out, and comforted Matt. as well as I could, feeling sure we should find Master Tingcomb at our journey's end. Soon we climb'd a hill, which eas'd us a little; but shortly after were bumping down again, and suffering worse than ever.

"Save us," moan'd Matt., "where will this end?"

The words were scarce out, when we turn'd sharp to the right, with a jolt that shook our teeth together, roll'd for a little while over smooth grass, and drew up.

I heard the fellows climbing down, and got my pistols out.

"Simmy," growl'd the minister, "where's the lantern?"

There was a minute or so of silence, and then the snapping of flint and steel, and the sound of puffing.

"Lit, Simmy?"

"Aye, here 'tis."

"Fetch it along then."

The handle of the door was turn'd, and a light flash'd into the hearse.

"Here, hold the lantern steady! Come hither, old Squeaks, and help wi' the end."

"Surely I will. Well was I call'd Young Look-alive when a gay, fleeting boy. Simmy, my son, thou'rt sadly drunken. O youth, youth! Thou wine-bibber, hold the light steady, or I'll tell thy mammy!"

"Oh, sir, I do mortally dread the devil an' all his works!"

"Now, if ever! 'The devil,' says he—an' Master Tingcomb still livin', an' in his own house awaitin' us!"

Be sure, his words were as good as a slap in the face to me. For I had counted the hearse to lead me straight to Master Tingcomb himself. 'In his own house,' too! A fright seiz'd me for Delia. But first I must deal with these scoundrels, who already were dragging out the coffin.

"Steady there!" calls the minister. The coffin was

more than half-way outside. I levell'd my pistol over the edge of the tool-chest, and fetch'd a yell fit to wake a ghost—at the same time letting fly straight for the minister.

In the flash of the discharge, I saw him, half-turn'd, his eyes starting, and mouth agape. He clapt his hand to his shoulder. On top of his wild shriek, broke out a chorus of screams and oaths, in the middle of which the coffin tilted up and went over with a crash. "Satan—Satan!" bawled Simmy, and, dropping the lantern, took to his heels for dear life. At the same moment the horses took fright; and before I could scramble out, we were tearing madly away over the turf and into the darkness. I had made a sad mess of it.

It must have been a full minute before the hedge turn'd them, and gave me time to drop out at the back and run to their heads. Matt. Soames was after me, quick as thought, and very soon we master'd them, and gathering up the reins from between their legs, led them back. As luck would have it, the lantern had not been quencht by the fall, but lay flaring, and so guided us. Also a curious bright radiance seem'd growing on the sky, for which I could not account. The three knaves were nowhere to be seen, but I heard their footsteps scampering in the distance, and Simmy

still yelling "Satan!" I knew my bullet had hit the minister; but he had got away, and I never set eyes on any of the three again.

Leaving Matt. to mind the horses, I caught up the lantern, and look'd about me. As well as could be seen, we were in a narrow meadow between two hills, whereof the black slopes rose high above us. Some paces to the right, my ear caught the noise of a stream running.

I turn'd the lantern on the coffin, which lay face downwards, and with a gasp took in the game those precious rogues had been playing. For, with the fall of it, the boards (being but thin) were burst clean asunder; and on both sides had tumbled out silver cups, silver salt-cellars, silver plates and dishes, that in the lantern's rays sparkled prettily on the turf. The coffin, in short, was stuff'd with Delia's silverware.

I had pick'd up a great flagon, and was turning it over to read the inscription, when Matt. Soames call'd to me, and pointed over the hill in front. Above it the whole sky was red and glowing.

"Sure," said he, "'tis a fire out yonder!"

"God help us, Matt.—'tis the House of Gleys!"

It took but two minutes to toss the silver back into the hearse. I clapp'd-to the door, and snatching the reins, sprang upon the driver's seat.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE LEDGE; AND HOW I SHOOK
HANDS WITH MY COMRADE.

WE had some ado to find the gate: but no sooner were through, and upon the high road, than I lash'd the horses up the hill at a gallop. To guide us between the dark hedges we had only our lantern and the glare ahead. The dishes and cups clash'd and rattled as the hearse bump'd in the ruts, swaying wildly: a dozen times Matt. was near being pitch'd clean out of his seat. With my legs planted firm, I flogg'd away like a madman; and like mad creatures the horses tore upward.

On the summit a glance show'd us all—the wild crimson'd sky—the sea running with lines of fire—and against it the inky headland whereon the House of Gleys flar'd like a beacon. Already from one wing—*our* wing—a leaping column of flame whirl'd up through the roof, and was swept seaward in smoke and sparks. I mark'd the coast-line, the cliff-tracks, the masts and hull of the *Godsend* standing out, clear as day and nearer, the yellow light flickering over the fields of young corn. We saw all this, and then were plunging

down hill, with the blaze full ahead of us. The heavy reek of it was flung in our nostrils as we gallop'd.

At the bottom we caught up a group of men running. 'Twas a boatload come from the ship to help. As our horses swept past them, one or two came to a terrified halt: but presently were running hard again after us.

The great gate stood open. I drove straight into the bright-lit yard, shouting "Delia!—where is Delia?"

"Here!" call'd a voice; and from a group that stood under the glare of the window came my dear mistress running.

"All safe, Jack! But what——" She drew back from our strange equipage.

"All in good time. First tell me—how came the fire?"

"Why, foul work, as it seems. All I know is I was sleeping, and awoke to hear the black seaman hammering on my door. Jumping up, I found the room full of smoke, and escap'd. The rooms beneath, they say, were stuff'd with straw, and the yard outside heap'd also with straw, and blazing. Ben Halliday found two oil-jars lying there——"

"Are the horses out?"

“Oh, Jack—I do not know! Shame on me to forget them!”

I ran towards the stable. Already the roof was ablaze, and the straw-yard, beyond, a very furnace. Rushing in, I found the two horses cowering in their stalls, bath'd in sweat, and squealing. But 'twas all fright. So I fetch'd Molly's saddle, and spoke to her, and set it across her back: and the sweet thing was quiet in a moment, turning her head to rub my sleeve gently with her muzzle: and follow'd me out like a lamb. The bay gave more trouble; but I sooth'd him in the same manner, and patting his neck, led him, too, into safety.

By this, all hope to save the house was over: for the well in the court yielded but twenty buckets before it ran dry, and after that no water was to be had. Of the wing where the fire burst out only the walls stood, and a few oaken rafters, that one by one came tumbling and crashing. The flames had spread along the roof, and were now licking the ceiling of the hall and spouting around the clock-tower. In the roar and hubbub, Billy's men work'd like demons, dragging out chairs, chests, and furniture of all kinds, which they strew'd in the yard, returning with shouts for more. One was tearing down the portraits in the hall: another was

pulling out the great dresser from the kitchen : a third had found a pile of tapestry and came staggering forth under the load of it.

"I had fasten'd the horses by the gate, and was ready to join in the work, when a shout was rais'd—

"Billy!—Where's Billy Pottery? Has any seen the skipper?"

"Sure," I call'd, "you don't say he was never alarm'd!"

"Black Sampson was in his room—where's Black Sampson?"

"Here I be!" cried a voice. "To be sure I woke the skipper before any o' ye."

"Then where's he hid? Did any see him come out?"

"Now, that we have not!" answer'd one or two.

I stood by the house-door shouting these questions to the men inside, when a hand was laid on my arm, and there in the shadow waited Billy himself, with a mighty curious twinkle in his eye. He put a finger up and signed that I should follow.

We pass'd round the out-buildings where, three hours before, Matt. Soames and I had hid together. I was minded to stop and pull on my boots, that were hid here : but (and this was afterwards the saving of me)

on second thoughts let them lie, and follow'd Billy, who now led me out by the postern gate.

Without speech we stepp'd across the turf, he a pace or two ahead. A night-breeze was blowing here, delicious after the heat of the fire. We were walking quickly towards the east side of the headland, and soon the blaze behind flung our shadows right to the cliff's edge, for which Billy made straight, as if to fling himself over.

But when, at the very verge, he pull'd up, I became enlighten'd. At our feet was an iron bar driven into the soil, and to it a stout rope knotted, that ran over a block and disappear'd down the cliff. I knelt and, pulling at it softly, look'd up. It came easy in the hand.

Billy, with the glare in his face, nodded : and bending to my ear, for once achiev'd a whisper.

"Saw one stealing hither—an' follow'd. A man wi' a limp foot—went over the side like a cat."

I must have appear'd to doubt this good fortune, for he added—

"'Be a truth-speakin' man i' the main, Jack—'lay over 'pon my belly, and spied a ledge—fifty feet down or less—'reckon there be a way thence to the foot. Dear, now ! what a rampin', tearin' sweat is this ?"

For, fast as I could tug, I was hauling up the rope.

Near sixty feet came up before I reach'd the end—a thick twisted knot. I rove a long noose; pull'd it over my head and shoulders, and made Billy understand he was to lower me.

“Sit i' the noose, lad, an' hold round the knot. For sign to hoist again, tug the rope hard. I can hold.”

He paid it out carefully while I stepp'd to the edge. With the noose about my loins I thrust myself gently over, and in a trice hung swaying.

On three sides the sky compass'd me—wild and red, save where to eastward the dawn was paling: on the fourth the dark rocky face seem'd gliding upwards as Billy lower'd. Far below I heard the wash of the sea, and could just spy the white spume of it glimmering. It stole some of the heart out of me, and I took my eyes off it.

Some feet below the top, the cliff fetch'd a slant inwards, so that I dangled a full three feet out from the face. As a boy I had adventured something of this sort on the north sides of Gable and the Pillar, and once (after a nest of eaglets) on the Mickledore cliffs: but then 'twas daylight. Now, tho' I saw the ledge under me, about a third of the way down, it look'd, in the darkness, to be so extremely narrow, that 'tis probable I should have call'd out to Billy to draw me up but for

the certainty that he would never hear: so instead I held very tight and wish'd it over.

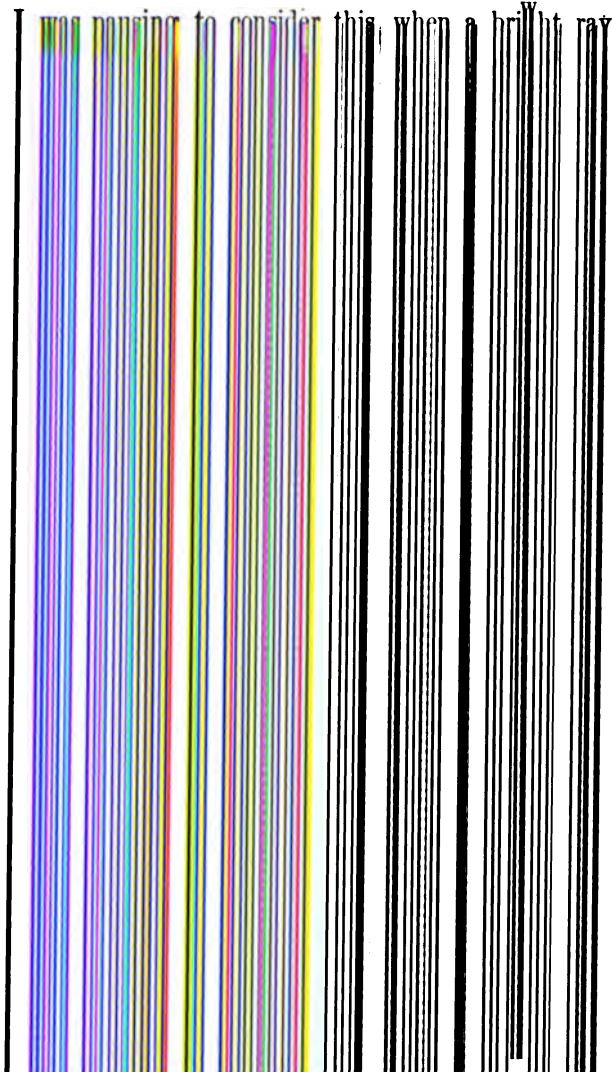
Down I sway'd (Billy letting out the rope very steady), and at last swung myself inward to the ledge, gain'd a footing, and took a glance round before slipping off the rope.

I stood on a shelf of sandy rock that wound round the cliff some way to my left, and then, as I thought, broke sharply away. 'Twas mainly about a yard in width, but in places no more than two feet. In the growing light I noted the face of the headland ribb'd with several of these ledges, of varying length, but all hollow'd away underneath (as I suppose by the sea in former ages), so that the cliff's summit overhung the base by a great way: and peering over I saw the waves creeping right beneath me.

Now all this while I had not let Master Tingcomb out of my mind. So I slipt off the rope and left it to dangle, while I crept forward to explore, keeping well against the rock and planting my feet with great caution.

I believe I was twenty minutes taking as many steps, when at the point where the ledge broke off I saw the ends of an iron ladder sticking up, and close beside it a great hole in the rock, which till now the curve of

the cliff had hid. The ladder no doubt stood on a second shelf below.



the cliff had hid. The ladder no doubt stood on a second shelf below.

I was pausing to consider this, when a bright ray stream'd across the sea towards me, and the red rim of the sun rose out of the waters, outfacing the glow on the headland, and rending the film of smoke that hung like a curtain about the horizon. 'Twas as if by alchemy that the red ripples melted to gold; and I stood watching with a child's delight.

I heard the sound of a footstep: and fac'd round.

Before me, not six paces off, stood Hannibal Tingcomb.

He was issuing from the hole with a sack on his shoulder, and sneaking to descend the steps, when he threw a glance behind—and saw me!

Neither spoke. With a face grey as ashes he turn'd very slowly, until in the unnatural light we look'd straight into each other's eyes. His never blink'd, but stared—stared horribly, while the veins swell'd black on his forehead and his lips work'd, attempting speech. No words came—only a long-drawn sob, deep down in his throat.

And then, letting slip the sack, he flung his arms up, ran a pace or two towards me, and tumbled on his face in a fit. His left shoulder hung over the verge;

his legs slipp'd. In a trice he was hanging by his arms, his old distorted face turn'd up, and a froth about his lips. I made a step to save him : and then jump'd back, flattening myself against the rock.

The ledge was breaking.

I saw a seam gape at my feet. I saw it widen and spread to right and left. I heard a ripping, rending noise—a rush of stones and earth : and, clawing the air, with a wild screech, Master Tingcomb pitch'd backwards, head over heels, into space.

Then follow'd silence : then a horrible splash as he struck the water, far below : then again a slipping and trickling, as more of the ledge broke away—at first a pebble or two sliding—a dribble of earth—next, a crash and a cloud of dust. A last stone ran loose and dropp'd. Then fell a silence so deep I could catch the roar of the flames on the hill behind.

Standing there, my arms thrown back and fingers spread against the rock, I saw a wave run out, widen, and lose itself on the face of the sea. Under my feet but eight inches of the cornice remain'd. My toes stuck forward over the gulf.

A score of startled gulls with their cries call'd me to myself. I open'd my eyes, that had shut in sheer giddiness. Close on my left the ledge was broke back to the

very base, cutting me off by twelve feet from that part where the ladder still rested. No man could jump it, standing. To the right there was no gap: but in one place only was the footing over ten inches wide, and at the end my rope hung over the sea, a good yard away from the edge.

I shut my eyes and shouted.

There was no answer. In the dead stillness I could hear the rafters falling in the House of Gleys, and the shouts of the men at work. The *Godsend* lay around the point, out of sight. And Billy, deaf as a stone, sat no doubt by his rope, placidly waiting my signal.

I scream'd again and again. The rock flung my voice seaward. Across the summit vaulted above, there drifted a puff of brown smoke. No one heard.

A while of weakness followed. My brain reel'd: my fingers dug into the rock behind till they bled. I bent forward—forward over the heaving mist through which the sea crawl'd like a snake. It beckon'd me down, that crawling water. . . .

I stiffen'd my knees and the faintness pass'd. I must not look down again. It flash'd on me that Delia had call'd me weak: and I hardened my heart to fight it out. I would face round to the cliff and work towards the rope.

'Twas a hateful moment while I turned: for to do

and set me on straw : and there, till far into the afternoon, I lay betwixt swooning and trembling, while Delia bath'd my head in water from the sea, for no other was to be had. And about four in the afternoon the horror left me, so that I sat up and told my story pretty steadily.

"What of the house?" I ask'd, when the tale was done, and a company sent to search the east cliff from the beach.

"All perish'd!" said Delia, and then smiling, "I am houseless as ever, Jack."

"And have the same good friends."

"That's true. But listen—for while you have lain here, Billy and I have put our heads together. He is bound for Brest, he says, and has agreed to take me and such poor chattels as are saved, to Brittany, where I know my mother's kin will have a welcome for me, until these troubles be pass'd. Already the half of my goods is aboard the *Godsend*, and a letter writ to Sir Bevill, begging him to appoint an honest man as my steward. What think you of the plan?"

"It seems a good plan," I answer'd slowly: "the England that now is, is no place for a woman. When do you sail?"

"As soon as you are recover'd, Jack."

"Then that's now." I got on my feet, and drew on my boots (that Matt. Soames had found in the laurel bushes and brought). My knees trembled a bit, but nothing to matter.

"Art looking downcast, Jack."

Said I: "How else should I look, that am to lose thee in an hour or more?"

She made no reply to this, but turned away to give an order to the sailors.

The last of Delia's furniture was hardly aboard, when we heard great shouts of joy, and saw the men returning that had gone to search the cliff. They bore between them three large oak coffers: which being broke, we came on an immense deal of old plate and jewels, besides over £300 in coin'd money. There were two more left behind, they said, besides several small bags of gold. The path up the cliff was hard to climb, and would have been impossible, but for the iron ladder they found ready fixt for Master Tingcomb's descent. In the hole (that could not be seen from the beach, the shelf hiding it) was tackle for lowering the chest: and below a boat moor'd, and now left high and dry by the tide. Doubtless, the arch-rascal had waited for his comrades to return, whom Matt. Soames and I had scar'd out of all stomach to do so. His body was

nowhere found. The sea had wash'd it off : but the sack they recover'd, and found to hold the choicest of Delia's heir-looms. Within an hour the remaining coffers and the money-bags were safe in the vessel's hold.

* * * * *

The sun was setting, as Delia and I stood on the beach, beside the boat that was to take her from me. Aboard the *Godsend* I could hear the anchor lifting, and the men singing, as, holding Molly's bridle, I held out my hand to the dear maid who with me had shar'd so many a peril.

"Is there any more to come?" she ask'd.

"No," said I, and God knows my heart was heavy :
"nothing to come but 'Farewell!'"

She laid her small hand in my big palm, and glancing up, said very pretty and demure—

"And shall I leave my best? Will not come, too, dear Jack?"

"Delia!" I stammer'd. "What is this? I thought you lov'd me not."

"And so did I, Jack : and thinking so, I found I loved thee better than ever. Fie on thee, now! May not a maid change her mind without being forced to such unseemly, brazen words?" And she heav'd a mock sigh.

But as I stood and held that little hand, I seem'd across the very mist of happiness to read a sentence written, and spoke it, perforce and slow, as with another man's mouth—

“Delia, you only have I lov'd, and will love! Blithe would I be to live with you, and to serve you would blithely die. In sorrow, then, call for me, or in trust abide me. But go with you now—I may not.”

She lifted her eyes, and looking full into mine, repeated slowly the verse we had read at our first meeting—

“‘In a wife's lap, as in a grave,
Man's airy notions mix with earth——’

—thou hast found it, sweetheart—thou hast found the Splendid Spur!”

She broke off, and clapp'd her hands together very merrily; and then, as a tear started—

“But thou'lt come for me, ere long, Jack? Else I am sure to blame some other woman. Stay——”

She drew off her ring, and slipt it on my little finger.

“There's my token! Now give me one to weep and be glad over.”

Having no trinkets, I gave my glove: and she kiss'd it twice, and put it in her bosom.

NOVELS AND STORIES BY "Q"

(A. T. QUILLER-COUCH)

"Of all the short-story writers, we are inclined, in many respects, to give Mr. A. T. Quiller-Couch the first position."—New York Times.

